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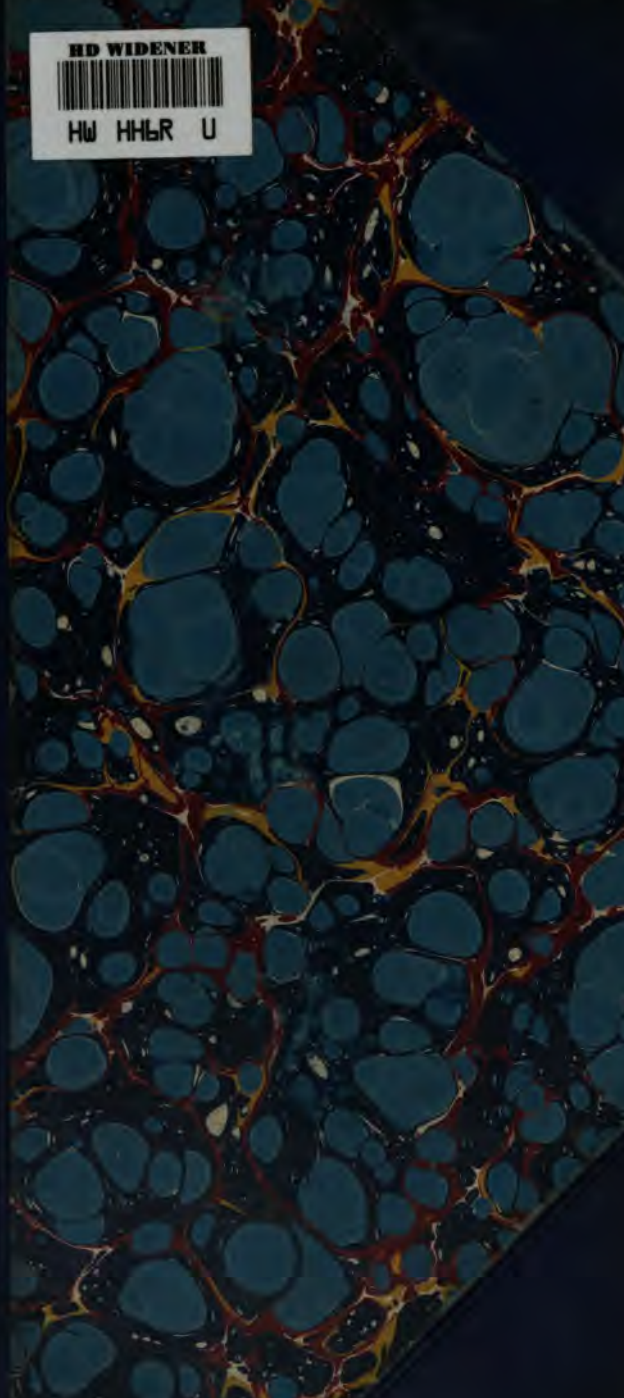
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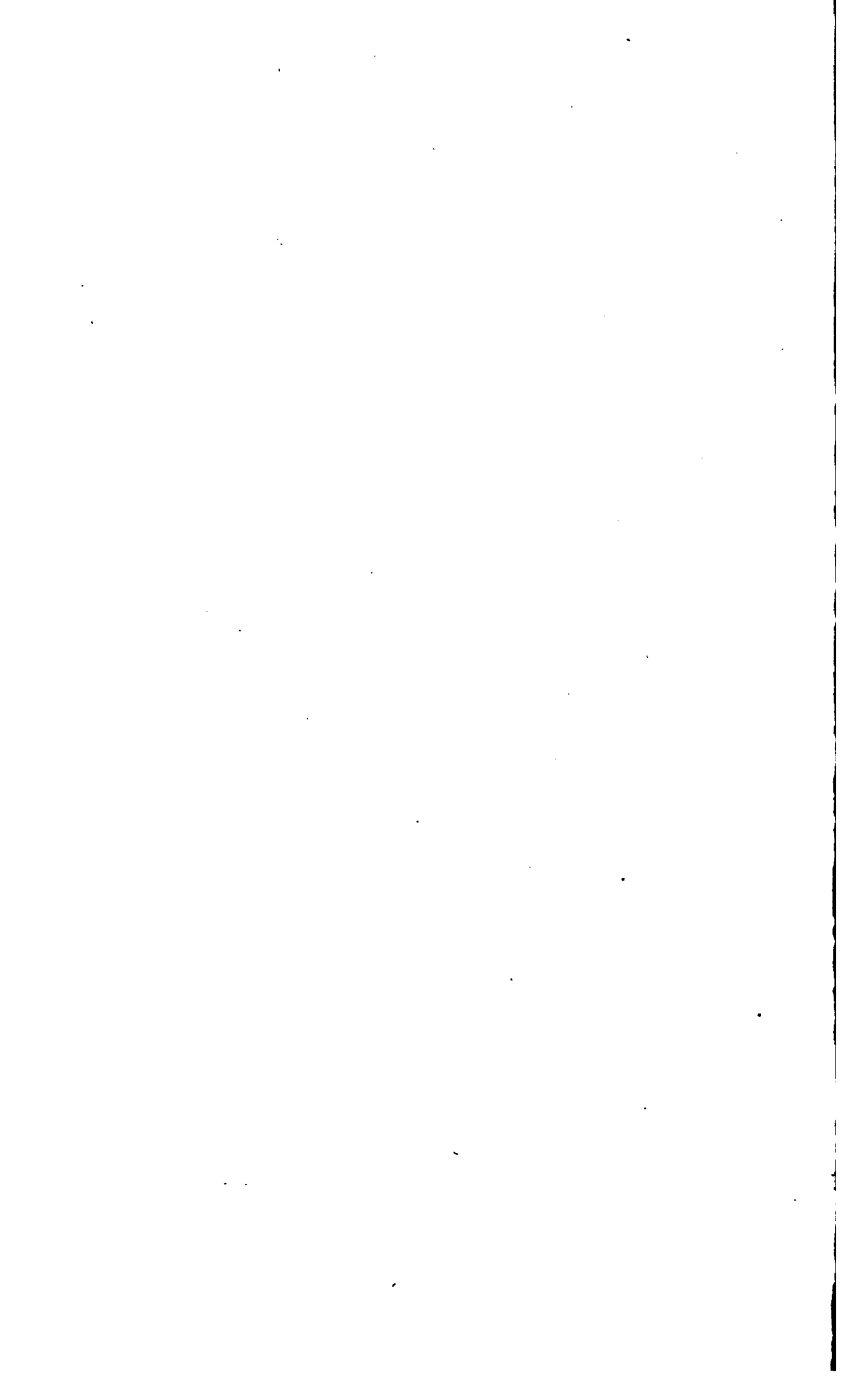
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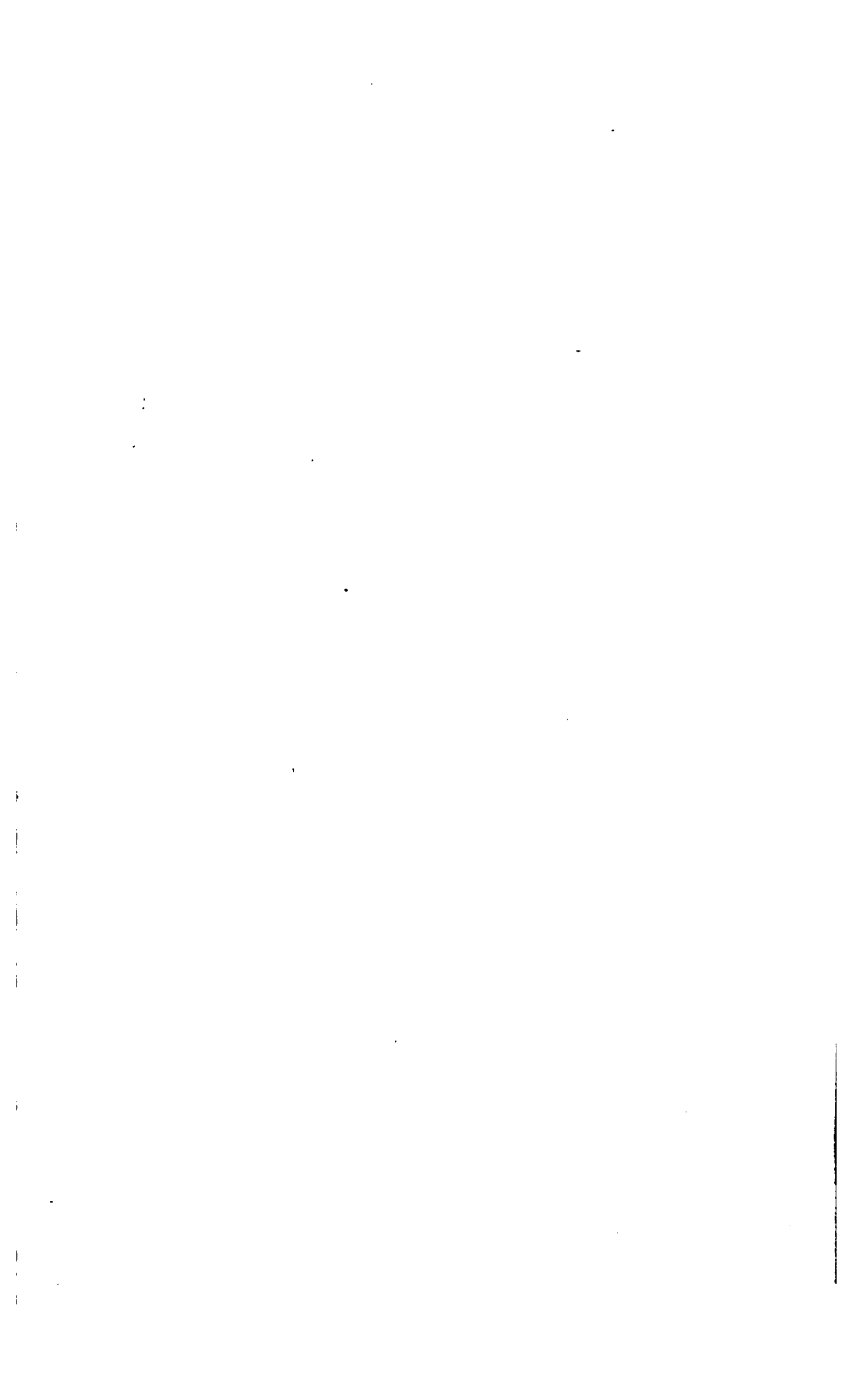
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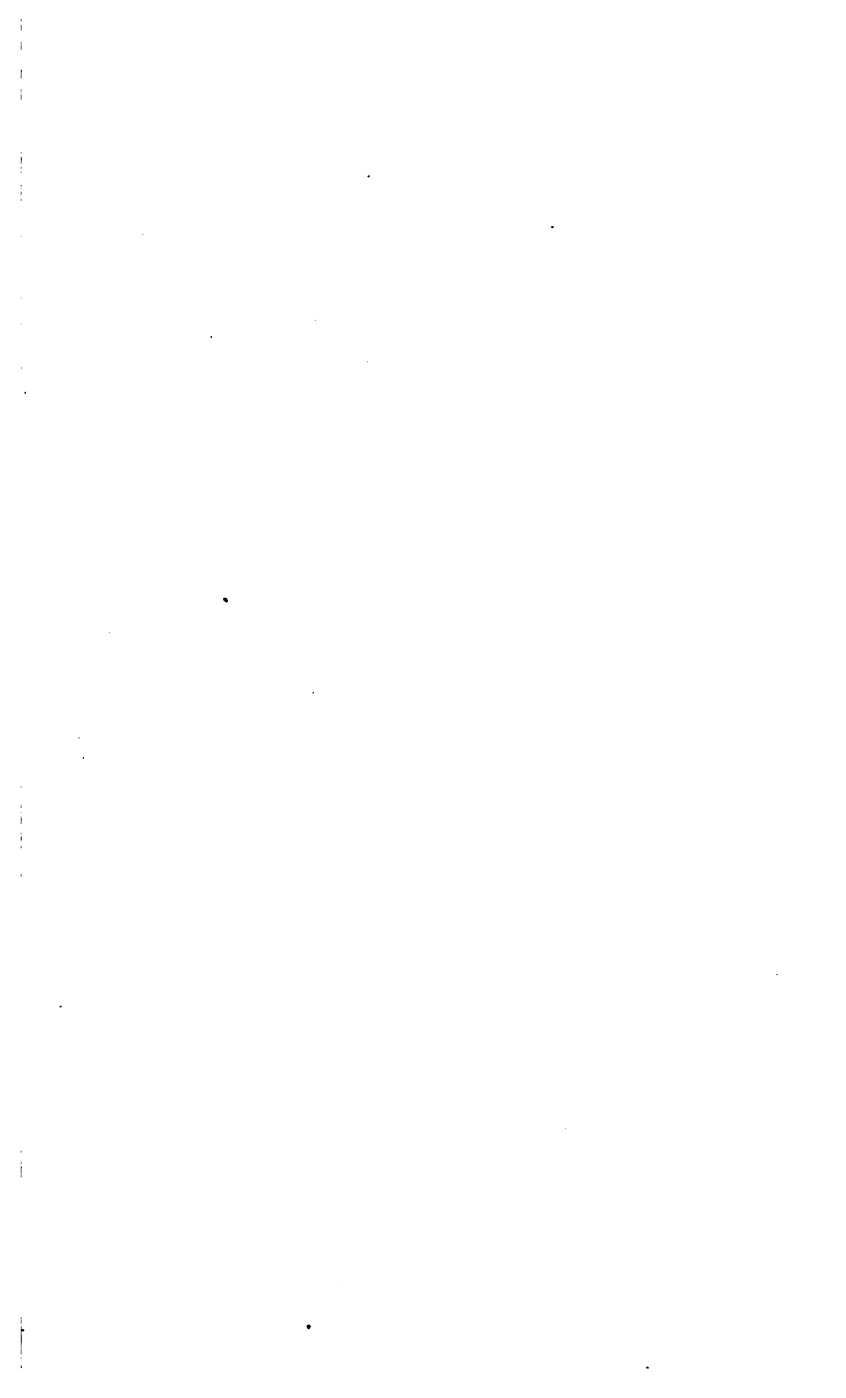
JOHN BARTLETT,
(A. M. 1871.)

Nov. 17, 1892.











AN DOGVANE.

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
A STORY OF
ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE.

BY
FRANCIS FRANCIS.

WITH
Illustrations by Leech.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.


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NEWTON DOGVANE.

CHAPTER I.

INCREASED DIGNITY OF THE DOGVANE FAMILY.

“ONLY nineteen thousand, five hundred pounds bid for seven hundred and fifty acres of excellent arable and pasture land. Gentlemen, really.”

Mr. Smifty was selling a desirable freehold estate at the auction mart.

“Really, gentlemen, really.”

“Worked to death”—“smothered with couch”—“wants re-fencing”—“regular

wilderness"—“wants a thousand pounds and more laid out on it”—ah! and one year’s rent thrown off ’fore you’ll get a tenant”—were some of the remarks which emanated from various yeoman-like and squirish-looking gentlemen who stood round.

“The finer the opportunity for the investment of capital, gentlemen. Never was so fine an opportunity; seven hundred and fifty acres of arable and pasture land, gentlemen, and a noble mansion.”

“With only two rooms in it fit to live in,” quoth a by-stander.

“A noble mansion, gentlemen, and farm-house contiguous.”

“With half a roof to it,” broke in the chorus again.

“Besides all which, gentlemen, those most picturesque ruins known as Tinkerton Abbey, standing within the grounds.”

NEWTON DOGVANE.

“And quite in keeping with the rest of the property,” said the chorus.

“And forming a natural embellishment to a most charming wilderness of—”

“Brambles and briars,” continued the chorus, breaking in at every opportunity.

“And a right of shooting over the Chickenweasle and Sparrowgaff farms, amounting to several hundred acres, gentlemen.”

Chorus: “There aint a ’ead o’ game on either of ’em.”

“A most desirable investment, and only nineteen thousand, five hundred pounds bid for it.”

“And quite enough, too,” &c., &c.

“A pack of hounds in the neighbourhood, with harriers handy, and only nineteen thousand. Thank you, sir ! Nineteen thousand, six hundred ; nineteen thousand, seven hundred — thank you. Eight hundred — thank you. Nineteen

thousand, eight hundred! A most desirable investment. *The* most desirable investment likely to come before the public in this mart for a long time to come, gentlemen. Land is very scarce; exceedingly so. Nine hundred—thank you, sir. Nineteen thousand, nine hundred. Really, gentlemen, it is nothing, absolutely nothing for it. Remember the political influence, gentlemen, such a property and establishment gives. Quite a revenue, too, to be got out of the ruins, gentlemen. Twenty thousand—and one hundred. Thank you. Shall I say one more, sir?—let me say one more, sir?” The bidder gave a negative nod. “Twenty thousand, one hundred pounds. Have you all done, gentlemen? Twenty thousand, one hundred—once—twice—going for twenty thousand, one hundred pounds. I shall ask you three times, gentlemen, when, if there is no other bidding, it must positively be

sold. Seven hundred and fifty acres of excellent arable and pasture land, substantial mansion, farm-house and out-buildings, and right of sporting over two farms, picturesque ruins and park-like grounds, known as the Dingham estate, going for twenty thousand, one hundred pounds. Have you all done? once? twice? thrice?—going—gone! The very cheapest lot I ever had the pleasure—I should say grief—of selling. Purchaser's name, if you please?"

"Dogvane," was the reply.

"Wish you joy of your bargain, Mr. Dogvane," quoth the chorus. "It 'll cost you four thousand, at least, before you go into it, sir," &c.

"Never mind that, my friend," was the answer. "The money's here, and if I like, it's nothing to no one."

"Step in here, Mr. Dogvane!"—and our hero's father, who might now almost

be considered a landed and estated gentleman, followed the auctioneer and his clerk into another room, to bind and ratify the bargain.

It is almost needless to say, after this, that Mr. Dogvane had retired from business; and having been for some time looking out for a desirable investment, as it is termed, had had his attention especially called to this one by his son. Squire Driffeld's embarrassments had at length compelled the sale of Dingham. He had been cast in a stiff law suit against the Rev. Cecil, which he had rashly plunged into, and this last straw broke the camel's back, and he went literally smash.

Newton, for reasons peculiarly his own, desired Dingham. It was just the thing his father wanted: it was just the thing his mother wanted—near Crookham, and close to Dealmont, Sir John Vasey's. The

Baronet was a trump card in Newton's hand. Sorry though we are to say it, with him he trumped the trick, and then, throwing the lead into his father's hand, won the game in a canter. Mr. Dogvane, sen., who had heard of this identical property at Skipton's, but who always kept his own counsel on such matters, went to the sale, determined to buy Dingham, cost what it might. Such a chance of becoming friendly with a baronet might not occur again—a house and land might be picked up any day, but a baronet was another affair; and poor old Dogvane, mean old Dogvane, miserable old Dogvane, thorough old English, toady, tuft-hunting, and lick-spittle old Dogvane, would gladly have paid another thousand or so for the honour of a baronet's acquaintance—while Mrs. Dogvane shook her head, and, though glowing with intense delight inwardly, outwardly “hoped it mightn't be

pride." As for Newton, he had gained his end, whatever that might be, and of course he was satisfied; while Ned was boisterous in his delight. But repairs and improvements were at once set about vigorously, and these Newton, by and under the advice and superintendence of Uncle Crabb, saw to, himself; while Mr. Dogvane, who was winding up matters in town, came down occasionally and stumped about over his estate, with a thick stick, which he would dig into the ground here and there, and turning it up, say:—

"There's your soil, sir. Ever see such mould, sir? Now, I don't want to brag, but don't you think it was a mons'sously cheap bargain?"

It was evident that he was in a great state of delight with his investment, and was never tired of expatiating on it. Newton had got him to appoint a brother-

in-law of Mr. Buncomb's as his farm-bailiff and overseer, the farm-house and buildings having been put into speedy repair for him; and under his skilful superintendence the estate soon began to wear a new aspect. Tidy, well-trimmed, hedges took the place of great straggling hedge-rows. The fields began to look clean, and like fields that were well cared for, and where the farmer was to be considered as well as the sportsman; and everything as regarded the farm appeared to go on advantageously. But the grounds were Newton's chief delight—the house—the gardens—the ruins. His father wanted to have a grand gentleman of taste from London, a prospect gardener, and who was recommended to him by a retired friend, and who would speedily have made a Rosherville of Dingham. But Newton combated the idea so strongly—promising that, “if his father would only leave it to

him first, he would do all that was necessary, and if he did not like it when it was done, then his father could have his friend down and alter it"—that he at length yielded, and Newton had the house and grounds to himself. Then came a season of charming excitement to Charlotte and Bessie. How they drove over to Dingham, and walked about, and planned, and altered, and chopped, and planted—Newton begging that they would assist him with their taste, pretending not to have a grain of his own. How the slightest hint of Bessie's was found in a day or two realised to the utmost, and how Bessie's cheek would glow with pleasure as some fresh view—some new contrivance or tasteful alteration, originally suggested by herself, (she really had excellent taste) suddenly broke upon her, and was pronounced by all an immense improvement. Oh, Newton! Newton! had you lived to the age of Methu-

selah, you couldn't have learnt the art of flattery better.

Then the ruins, the remains of a window, two columns, and an odd wall or two, half-covered with ivy, and hidden by brambles and briars, had to be brought out. Accordingly the brambles and briars were mercilessly exterminated, and an extensive fernry planted in their place; while rough, rude, and rustic seats, sometimes a stump or log of a tree, sometimes a moss-covered rock or so, were cleared away here and there in unobtrusive spots; and behind the ruins, a little brawling, noisy rivulet was coaxed into forming a rattling, brattling, quasi-important cascade, with huge stones, creepers, &c. Nature was very little disturbed, and yet in two months it wasn't the same place. A piece of turf was left just extensive enough for a pic-nic party, a hollow was dug out behind the cascade to serve for a wine-cooler; and a cave and a fire place, &c. &c., weré also established. Now

and then Captain Stevens would walk over when he was at Crookham, which was not often now, for he was expecting his route shortly. He gave Newton many useful hints, however, when he did come. Mr. Dogvane, on looking over the repairs and improvements from time to time, was quite satisfied, and Mrs. Dogvane wondered how and where her Newton acquired the taste and management to work such wonderful alterations and improvements with so much success. There was one good point in Newton's character, and that was a most advantageous one in the present instance—he was not above learning or asking questions of anyone; and one way and the other he picked up a good deal of useful information in small things. Thus, the further he went on with his task, the more ready and clear-sighted he became at every little emergency. The repairs, &c., were all finished, and then came the furnishing of the house; and here both Mr. and Mrs. Dogvane

would have a word in the arrangements. Mrs. Dogvane wanted it all very fine and splendid, and all covered up closely; and Mr. Dogvane wanted it all very plain and substantial, and not covered up at all. Newton had a deal of trouble at times to reconcile such opposite opinions; but still, using freely the good taste of Charlotte and Bessie, and occasionally, the Captain and Uncle Crabb's, he would take upon himself to furnish a room, approximating as nearly as might be to both tastes, without offending either; and, if it did not entirely satisfy at first, they soon got accustomed to it, until, owing to Newton's constantly taking the lead in these small matters, and their own want of any knowledge or judgment on them, his father and mother gradually left it all to him.

At length, by the time spring was fully advanced, the house was in a sufficient state of advance to receive them; they had to make a few shifts of course, and there was

still a great deal to do, one way and another. A gardener had already been some time in his place. Mrs. Dogvane, whose ambition at present knew no higher flight, would needs have a boy in buttons, who waited at table and broke things, and drove her out in a species of twelve-dozen hamper, called a basket pony-chair. A perfect imp of mischief was this lad, whose patronymic was Waggle,—how he obtained it no one could tell; all the parish called him Waggle, and he would not answer to any other name, and not often to that, much to the disgust of Mrs. Dogvane, who made a struggle to have him called “the page” and “Alexander,” having a fancy for that name. But, on hearing Uncle Crabb address him as Buttons, and Mr. Dogvane call him “Alec,” she gave it up—even Waggle she thought an improvement on that.

The demon of mischief had undoubtedly entered into the soul of Master Waggle,

and for some time there was hardly a thing about the premises which did not bear some trace of his peculiar idiosyncrasy; until at length, on going into the kitchen-garden one day—being attracted to the spot by a considerable outcry—Newton found the youth hanging on to the gardener in mortal conflict, kicking, biting, scratching, and howling enough for any ten lads of his age. He had broken three pots of favourite plants in the conservatory, where he had no business whatever, for which act the gardener took summary vengeance with the handle of a rake. Newton took him by the shoulder, and, in spite of his struggles and outcries, put him out of the front gate, and threatened him with condign punishment if he dared to come within it again. Of course, there was a pettifogging attorney handy, and of course an action was the consequence. Of course, the verdict was, “served him right,” and,

of course, Mr. Dogvane had to pay a smart bill of costs on both sides. Henceforth they resolved on a respectable coachman and a brougham ; and Newton was deputed to acquire the necessary concomitants to such a high and mighty state—and Mrs. Dogvane's importance dilated accordingly—and Newton, having had enough of dealing with gentlemen horse-dealers, went to a professional, and was only robbed, instead of being both robbed and cheated. The right of shooting extended over two or three neighbouring farms, and had some tolerable covers attached ; and, finding that the poachers had begun to be pretty busy round about him, Newton bethought him that a keeper would be necessary to complete their arrangements, and mentioned it to Mr. Dogvane. Now, in all Mr. Dogvane's wildest dreams of country life, his imagination had never ventured to soar to the dignity of having a real, live game-

keeper of his own ; and it took some four-and-twenty hours to realise the grandeur of such a proposal and situation. Having duly considered it, however, he decided upon the necessity of one, and gave Newton the orders for putting one on forthwith. Nothing which had yet been done, gave the good gentleman half so much importance and magnificence in his own eyes, and he spoke of "Our gamekeeper"—"My keeper, sir"—and "The keeper"—as if it were a phrase giving such pleasure to the tongue, that it could not be sufficiently often repeated ; and when his first assess-paper came in, he logged him down in all the dignity of his office, and looked upon the tax-paper as a sort of patent of nobility and magnificence, and asked from fifty to a hundred retired and semi-retired sporting-friends to shoot with him the very next September, all of whom pro-

mised "to give him a look in and smash a covey or two."

"Whatever you do," said Uncle Crabb to Newton, whilst Newton was considering about a keeper, "don't have one from the neighbourhood. It's all very well their knowing the land, the covers, and the poachers, and so forth; but any man of ordinary intelligence will find all that out in a month; and you may depend that a man, who has no connection in the place, will be ten to one more likely to do you justice, than any of these skulking vagabonds about here, who are all poachers in heart, and who'd be sure to rob you if you tried to make a keeper of any of them. Again, whenever you do engage a keeper, allow him his beer, and make him have it in the cask in his own house, and never forgive him if you catch him in the public-house. I've known many a good cover half-stripped by one band of poachers,

while the keeper has been made drunk and helpless in a public-house by another. Don't allow any perquisites. If you have rabbits, keep them, or give them away to the farmers and labourers; it will conciliate them, and keep them very often from habits of helping themselves—a habit which, once contracted, soon creates a confusion in their zoological knowledge, so that they become unable to tell a rabbit from a hare; and a still further confusion soon takes place, till they really can't tell feathers from fur; and if this is the case with labourers, it is apt to be occasionally much worse with keepers, who have far greater opportunities, and temptation always at hand. Besides which, when the rabbits are the keeper's perquisite, they often encourage them most unduly, and all sorts of heartburnings and jealousies spring up in consequence. Give a good reward for the capture of poachers; but don't give head-

money for vermin, unless you wish to pay for every stoat, weasel, rat, cat, hedgehog, jay, magpie, crow, and hawk your keeper, and his satellites and friends, can collect for you far and near. It's the keeper's business to trap vermin; so see that he brings you a fair quantity, and nails them up, a terror to all evil-doers; and if he won't do it without extra-pay, start him and get another. By the way, I've heard some folks say that hedgehogs don't do any harm to game. I can only say that *I've known them to eat full-grown partridges.** If any one doubts a hedgehog's capability to do so, let him look at the formidable array of grinders an old boar shows, and then doubt it if he likes. I have known nest after nest spoilt in the most mysterious way, and cats, weasels, &c., blamed

* Numberless well-authenticated instances of hedgehogs, caught *in flagrante*, destroying poultry, partridges, and even pheasants, have set this question at rest.

for it. But I feel sure that, from my having found a great number of hedgehogs in the neighbourhood immediately after, that they had at least their share in the mischief. So kill 'em by all means, and, what's more, eat 'em—they're delicious."

And Newton thought the advice so good, that he determined to follow it—all but the hedgehog-eating at least. Whilst he was thinking over it an idea struck him, and he hastened off to London to put it into effect. Four o'clock on the next afternoon found him in St. Giles', groping up a dark staircase.

"A very cut-throat-looking place this!" said Newton to himself, as he toiled up the flight of filthy, rickety stairs, which threatened every moment to give way beneath his tread, and precipitate him into some dark unfathomable gulf below. Up, up—creak, creak—he met something alive, crawling down stairs like some gigantic spider down the wall of a cellar.

“I say, my lad, which is Tightner’s crib?”

Hardly were the words out of his mouth, when the thing, which looked like a bundle of rags, seemed to become suddenly animated, and turning round, it fled up the stairs with astonishing rapidity. Wondering at this, Newton quickened his own pace to a run, as if in pursuit. Arriving at the landing-place, he saw the ragged figure of a boy, kicking and shaking at a door, and calling out to some one within, “Daddy! Daddy! Here’s a ——” But, before he had time to finish his intended warning, Newton had him by the arm.

“What did you run away for, lad? Be quiet, I don’t want to hurt you.”

But the child threw himself upon his back, and kicked, bit, and fought like a little fury.

“Leave go of I. What do ’ee want wi’ daddy?”

There was a growl from a dog within,

which changed to a slight yelp, as if some one had kicked it. In the midst of all this the door opened, and there stood a miserable gaunt-looking man, with nothing but a ragged pair of trousers and a tattered shirt on. Newton could hardly recognise the Tightner of yore (whose neatly-laced ankle-jacks and ribbed cotton stockings were, next to his kennel, his pride) in the cadaverous wretch before him. Mr. Tightner started back at the sight of Newton, and, pulling the lad off the ground by one hand, he gave him a cuff on the side of the head with the other, which sent him into a corner, where he cowered and howled.

“Now, then, &c., &c., stop that row, you Billy.” And Billy, whom Newton now got a good sight of for the first time, and who might have been of any age from eight to fifteen, subsided into chokes and sniffs. The room was a filthy attic, containing a broken stool by way of furniture, some dirty

straw in one corner, on which crouched another bundle of rags, shivering and moaning; an old blind bulldog sat opposite the poor creature, with its sightless eyes turned towards him, occasionally licking the thin hand that rested on his head. "Don't 'ee be frightened, Tommy. He shall have some bread-and-butter soon." But the idiot only crouched the closer, shivering violently. "Poor critter," said Mr. Tightner, "that 'ere's the 'ardest to bear on it all, mister, to set and see 'im a shivering there; and Mr. Tightner arranged the straw, and patted the child kindly, seeking to soothe its fear. Whilst he was engaged in this, Newton had turned to the recumbent Billy, and pulling out half-a-crown, gave it to him, making a signal for him to fetch something to eat and drink—a signal Billy was wonderfully quick in understanding—and seizing the coin, he vanished from the room before his father had turned round.

“Rather low-water mark, eh, Tightner?”

“Regler dead low, sir,” said Tightner in a weak dispirited tone, as he sat feebly down on the window-seat; “can’t be much lower, sir, without bein’ knocked out o’ time, sir.”

Mr. Tightner’s story it is unnecessary to enlarge on. He had been trying his hand at getting an honest living since he had last seen Newton, and had got, instead of it, an honest starving. Mrs. Tightner’s *weakness* had increased, until a few days before, in a state of *delirium tremens*, after a fit of rather longer drunkenness than usual, she had either fallen or thrown herself out of window.

“The sight o’ her, sir, a layin’ there,” said Mr. Tightner, “smashed, with her ’ead druv into her stummick, sir. It was so ’orrid, sir—oh, so awful ’orrid!—I never think I could see anythink ’alf so ’orrid. I was frightened to death o’ nights, and woke up screamin’, I did, sir, dreadful bad. And when I mind what she was when I married her—as pooty, light-

alive a gal as you'd hever wish to clap heyeyes on, ah dear! And when I think as she tooked to gin-drinkin' from me, sir, and she a innocent country gal, too, and this is wot come of it all, I felt as if I'd a been her murderer. I did feel it, sir, that's just wot I felt, and—and—d'ye think I raily was her murderer, sir?" And the man trembled in a perfect phrensy of anxiety and weakness, as he waited hungrily and eagerly for Newton's answer. Newton gradually calmed him with a few words; and as Master Billy returned at this moment with a pot of beer, a loaf, a lump of cheese, and some stony-looking sausages—the contents of which we will not seek to pry into, for they were twopence a pound, and meat was eightpence,—Newton would not let him speak a word more until the greater part of the viands had disappeared.

"I suppose, then, you have given up gin, Tightner," said Newton, after watching the

NEWTON DOGVANE

disappearance of the food with satisfaction.

“If the hocean was full on it, sir, I’d never go within a ’undred miles on it. Never, never. It ’ud kill me—pison me. If ever I touch another drop, may I rot till—”

But Newton stopped him.

“That’ll do. And I suppose you’re tired of dog-fancying, too?”

To this, also, Mr. Tightner returned a suitable reply.

To shorten the matter, Newton, finding that Tightner understood the care and breeding of game, and, of course, was thoroughly acquainted with everything appertaining to dogs, vermin, &c., and thinking that he was sufficiently beaten down by misery to have attained a turning point, announced to him his intention of making him his keeper, “if he liked the situation, and thought himself fit for it.”

“Why, sir,” said Tightner, “that’s the

werry line I started life in ; but got among the dorg fightin' and fancyin', and in the warment line, and a bad line it is; and many's the time, arter I took up the fancy, I wished myself back again ; but who'd a 'ad me? It was a doner with me, the werry bobbies knowed me. And now I've got the chance agin, sir, why, if tryin' to be honest, sir, and to do my dooty by you, sir, witch a hangel vith vings at this minit couldn't be no kinder, nor no saviour, of a cove as was just goin' right away to the werry bad—the downright bad, sir, and no mistake about it. If—if—if—

But Mr. Tightner couldn't go on ; his gratitude got into his throat and choked him, and he relieved himself by looking out of window, and “darning them cats as wos always a scratchin' the tiles off on to a cove's head.”

Newton got up, and putting some money on the table, said, as he was about to go :—

“ Well, then, Tightner, I shall expect to see you, bag and baggage, at Dingham the day after to-morrow. There’s a cottage ready furnished for you, with a bit of garden behind. Clear out of this as soon as you can. Get what you require for yourself and these youngsters, make yourselves decent, and get away out of London without delay. Poor little fellow ! ” and Newton walked over towards the idiot, who, his hunger having been appeased, seemed quieter and more composed.

As Newton approached him, the old bulldog growled savagely.

“ Now then, old Jack, ain’t you got no manners ? This ’ere’s a friend—d’ye hear ? a friend.”

The old dog turned his sightless head towards his master, pricked forward his stumps of ears, wagging his tail slowly.

“ Shake hands, Jack, d’ye hear ? a friend ; ” and the dog, raising his head slowly, with a

peculiar snuff, which caused him to show a triangular portion of his front teeth, held out his paw. "Take it, sir, and he'll never forget you," said Tightner, as he patted his head.

Newton took hold of the dog's paw.

"By, by, old Jack ; you and I will be great friends soon."

The dog licked his hand ; and, as Newton dropped his paw, turned once more towards his charge ; and Newton, after a few more directions to Tightner, took his way down the creaking stairs.

CHAPTER II.

A COURSE TO BE REPROBATED.

HAVING settled our friends in their new house, we must once again look back.

One day, while engaged in superintending the careful transplanting of some violets and sundries to a shady bank by an old moss-covered stone, which formed a seat near the cascade, Newton saw Ned riding towards him.

By the way, Newton had had the brambles, &c., cleared away from that very stone a few days before, because Bessie had said, "it

would make a nice seat;" and was now having the violets, &c., transplanted, because she had, on her next visit, happened to remark that "that bank ought to be a flowery bank," and that "violets, cowslips, primroses, snowdrops, and so forth, would very much improve it."

"I say, old fellow, what are you going to do to-morrow?" asked Ned, after the first greeting was over.

"Why, I thought of trying to see what I can do towards making a kind of hanging garden just under that east window. It was an idea that struck me the other day, and I—"

"Why, that's what Bess has been mad about—some Chinese or Japanese bosh or other which she's picked up somewhere." (Really, we almost feel inclined to remonstrate with one of our own characters for the above speech—so very inconsiderate, eh, young ladies? Besides—"Bess! Mad!!

Bosh!!!”—Confound such vulgar, brotherly familiarity.)

Newton hemmed, and trowelled away at a violet assiduously, with a very decided increase of colour.

“But come, old fellow—bother your hanging gardens; I want you to go to Tagmuffin Coursing Meeting.

“I should like to go very much; but, really, my hands are so full here just now that I can’t spare even half a day. You must excuse me.”

“But I won’t excuse you. Besides, what are the girls to do? I said I’d no doubt you’d drive them, as I was going to ride, and I can’t have them left on my hands.”

This was, as the reader will allow, a very different light in which to view the matter—very much so. The *ladies* (pray remark the plural number, all you whom it may concern, of whichever sex)—the

ladies had talked of planning a hanging garden, or something of that description, on the next day, "as Mr. Dogvane so very much desired that sort of thing, and really did not know how it ought to be done." They now, it appeared, talked of going coursing—and it was astonishing the very heavy amount of weighty business which stood over forthwith.

"Oh! I'm sure I— but—you see—" (not liking to come to all at once. Remark the extreme care we always take in guarding those sensitive little feelings and points, keeping up as a fiction to ourselves what is fact to all the rest of the world). Mr. Newton Dogvane was, as we have shown, in love, very much in love, with Miss Bessie Bowers; and Bessie with him; and yet Bessie and Newton wouldn't have allowed any one to suppose that they knew it, or that they were anything in the world to each other but very plea-

sant acquaintances—almost brother and sister in fact (to the outward world)—upon any consideration. And even now, Newton would almost sooner have stayed at home, and despoiled, nay, ravished himself from a day's extreme enjoyment "with the object of his," &c., &c., (but never mind all that), than have seen a smile of detection come over Ned's countenance, in consequence of his (Newton's) coming round too soon, or biting at the proffered bait too eagerly. What a curious thing human nature is!—what a wondrous scheme of apparent paradoxes and contradictions! People sneer at metaphysics and metaphysicians, as they do at all things beyond their reach: as, for instance, the wilfully bad man sneers at religion; and yet he'd like to be religious, did you look into the innermost chamber of his heart, only he can't—so he sneers, contradiction one. The fool sneers at the

wise man; yet, in his innermost heart there is nothing he would like so well as to be wise; but he can't—so he sneers, contradiction two. In like manner, the coward, when he dares, sneers at the brave man—the drunkard at the temperate man—the sensualist at the virtuous one—and so on, *ad infinitum*. It is the old fable of the fox and the grapes, with contradiction upon contradiction multiplied many times. And so people in the present day sneer at metaphysicians. Would to heaven there were more of them; for what subject is there so well worthy of study as the human mind? and what so ennobling in its study as the noblest and most wonderful of the creations of the Creator of All? In this consisted the superior wisdom of the ancients over that of the present day. By the word “wisdom,” we do not mean “science,” and desire the terms may not be confounded;

for the science we boast of is as far apart from wisdom, as the manufacturing of pins' heads is from the saving of an immortal soul. In this, then, consisted their superiority, that, whereas their philosophy was devoted to studying the works of the Creator, our philosophy has gradually dwindled down to the study of our own, and by the attitude we thus assume, we arrogate our works over His. But now to get gently and gradually back again. We don't want to undervalue science any more than we would the means by which men earn their daily bread. We only think that the study of mind is a nobler and even a wiser study than the study of matter; and we wish that all study was not so exclusively given to matter, and that there were more metaphysicians. What a contrast between the age of Bacon and Locke, and the age of Tupper! Goodness gracious!

It may seem a little out of place, this philosophical speculation, or argument rather; but if so, it only, by its singular contradiction to its surrounding associations, proves our hypothesis of contradictions—and if the reader doesn't like philosophy, he won't read it, that's certain; and if he does like philosophy, he'll be pleased to find a nugget of it anywhere.

So, to return to Mr. Dogvane, who stood hesitating and stammering.

“ Well — but — you see — why don't you drive them yourself? ”

It was Ned's turn to colour and hesitate now.

“ Why—ahem!—I—the fact is—” (a man very often says, “ the fact is,” when he wants to sail very close to telling a lie without telling one)—“ the fact is, that—ah!—I thought of riding your roan mare, and I thought it would be a capital opportunity of steadying her at her fences. She rushes a little too

much, and only wants a careful hand and practice ; so I thought I'd come and speak to you, and you could drive Sir John Vasey's phaeton. Sir John's one of the committee, you know, and he's obliged to ride, and has put the phaeton at our disposal ; or, if you don't like to drive, why, Uncle Crabb will go inside, and Shackel will go with you on the box. I don't see how things could be better."

Nor, in truth, did Mr. Dogvane ; so, after pro-ing and con-ing to a decent extent, he came round to the agreement, as if he really was going a *little* against his inclination, but didn't mind obliging. Pleasant hypocrisy ! Of course, he didn't suppose that any one could imagine that he went because he liked *the ladies'* society.

Accordingly, on the morrow, at nine o'clock (Newton had been awake and watching the weather since about five), Newton found himself at Mr. Bowers's breakfast table, and, in due time, on the box of Sir John's phaeton,

with a handsome, well-behaved pair of bright bays before him, and the two prettiest girls in the whole county-side behind him. He drove a part of the way.

They had to go about sixteen or seventeen miles, but finding that he could not turn round to converse, and that Uncle Crabb had all the conversation to himself, he handed the reins to the servant, and edging round on his elbow, just so as he could comfortably command Charlotte's *bonnet*, but Bessie's *face*, he commenced conversation, and chatted away at his ease till they reached Tagmuffin Park, where the meeting was held.

Tagmuffin Park was a magnificent domain of several thousand acres. The noble owner, third Earl of Doncaster, was a great agricultural and sporting patron. A fine old country gentleman, he patronised the sports of the country to a considerable extent. He had mingled much in politics, and headed a party, but, like all other parties, they sought only

their own power, caring little whether their country got any good of them or no, and thus their tub, when it got into place, had no strong moral-power bottom to stand on ; and, consequently, a slide having been properly greased and prepared for it by the tallow-interest party, who, in fact, laid themselves out for it, it slid off the groove out of the way, and the Tallows have had it all their own way ever since.

Lord Tagmuffin, eldest son of the Earl of Doncaster, was very fond of coursing, and placed the park at the disposal of the public once a year. To this meeting, coursers and dogs came from far and near. It was rather a grand affair, with cups to be run for, and a second day to run off the ties on, &c., &c. As they rode through the grand gates of Tagmuffin Park, over which stood, carved in stone, the arms of the Doncaster family (three muffins gules, surmounted by a racehorse rampant, with two gentlemen clothed in large

calves, and nothing else, and bearing each a shillelah which would delight the heart of a Rapparee, for supporters), they saw in the distance a crowd comprised of beaters, flags, horsemen, footmen, carriages, dogs, &c., &c., and towards this they steered.

The card of the sport showed three stakes to be run for—the Doncaster Plate, a thirty-two dog stake; the Tagmuffin Cup, also for thirty-two dogs; and the Puppy Purse, a sixteen dog puppy stakes. There was Mr. Smith's Slasher against Mr. Brown's Crasher; Mr. Jones's Smasher against Mr. Robinson's Dasher; Mr. Green's Miss Lucy against Mr. Thompson's Miss Nancy; and Mr. Muggins's Idiot Boy, Idiot Lad, Idiot Lass, Idiot Girl, and Idiot Female—Mr. Muggins seemed partial to St. Luke's. Besides these, there was Mr. Boskey's Bell, Bet, Bess, Bee, and Blister; Mr. Cross's Crack, Claw, Crow, Chase, and Chizzle; Mr. Dogberry's Duck, Dew, Death, and Desperation; and so on through

the alphabet. Most of the kennels seemed regularly lettered and ticketed.

And now the business of the day begins in sober earnestness. The crowd moves slowly onward over the turf. Slasher and Crasher are in the slips; they are both black dogs: Slasher carries the red collar and Crasher the white; and solemnly still the procession moves onward. There had been a little joking and laughing, but the greater part of the crowd are quiet enough now. The flagsmen look particularly magnificent, and drop their flag-sticks on the toes of the crowd. When a halt is called—a beater points out a hare in her form. Poor puss! she is hardly certain yet what all this unwonted crowd means, and she anxiously watches it from her form. A dog drops a yelp, and her back and ears seem to collapse and sink almost out of sight. A beater approaches, and

the next moment she is up and away.

"She's every inch a hare," says a bystander; "now for it."

A terrific uproar of dogs, straining, tearing, and howling, like the dogs of hell let loose, only they're not let loose. Very small grooms are pulled over by their charges; but they hang on to them like grim death, for they know that it's half a sovereign for a let-go, independent of the disgrace of the thing.

Slasher and Crasher strain at the leash. "Off," says the judge, and away they go. It's a fine sight as the dogs go almost as if they were still coupled, and the judge's red coat glances like a meteor beside them. "Two to one, Slasher's first up." "Done with you, sir. If ever he's first up, I'll eat him." "Which, the dog or the hare?" "Both, by Jingo." "There, Slasher fetches her; I told you

so. Two half-crowns of you, sir. There's a go-by." "Go-by be blowed; why, they aint never fetched her at all yet! and as for Slasher fetchin' a hare, why, he can't fetch a hay-rick, leave alone a hare." "Keep back, gents, you must keep back." Flagsmen wroth. "Now they turn her. Bravo red collar." "Bravo white, you mean." "No, I don't, red wins. Three to two, red wins." "There's a wrench." "There's a go-by for white. White's doing all the work." "Go 'long with you; what do you know about it? Why, the 'are served him." "Keep back there. Back, you sir, shove that chap's 'ead into his vesket-pocket, Jim." Flags facetious. "Red wins! Red wins!" "Red's a doing all the work!" "Five to four on red—six to four on red—seven to four on red—two to one on red—done with you." "Done, done." "How much in?" "Half crowns"—"crowns"—

"pounds." "Keep back, can't ye hear? &c., your &c.'s, keep back?" Flags furious. "White's in again—white's a doin' it now—bravo." "My heye, there's a wrench, and there's another—white wins." "There's a kill—a kill with merit." "No, it aint." "Yes, it is." "Crasher wins, for a hundred—I told ye so—there's the white flag." "Now, you might as well keep back, you'll see better." Flags desponding. "Hooroar!" "I'll draw of you, sir"—"and. you, sir"—"and me, sir." "That gent with the white hat." "Him with the drab coat." "Who are ye looking for, Bill?" "Why, a cheeky fellow, with a wall-eye?" "Where's that cove with the wide-awake, who laid me two to one?" "Here you are, sir." "Jones!" "Thank you." Thus a confused Babel of tongues ran on during every course.

Course follows course in rapid succes-

sion ; sometimes the hares are killed, and sometimes they get away ; Crasher is disposed of, and Dasher is disposed of, and likewise Miss Nancy and some of the Insane family, and the B's, C's, and D's, &c., are now undergoing the same process. Newton enjoys the whole thing amazingly, for the day is moderately fine, and the fun and chaff going on is not bad—he appreciates it ; the crowd is sensible that ladies' ears and ladies' eyes are there. Charlotte and Bessie are very much delighted too. Uncle Crabb stalks about grimly amongst the crowd, and examines the dogs with a critical eye, and growls at the Judge for a puppy—"A donkey, sir, who can't ride to the dogs any more than an old apple-woman ;" and when Crack was declared to beat Bell, and Uncle Crabb lost half a sovereign on it—"Why, Bell did all the work down in that hollow ; while the Judge was actually riding behind the hill,

or through the wood, or elsewhere, and couldn't see a bit of it. He a judge! I'd make a better judge out of a barber's apprentice, or I'd hang him from his own pole."

Uncle Crabb growls at the judge—everybody growls at the judge—except a wide-awake few, who know the pedigrees, performances, condition, and weight* of nearly every dog in the field; and they knew well enough that it was only the losers who grumbled, while they, as they pocketed the half-crowns, crowns, and pounds, were quite satisfied that "nothing could be fairer than his decisions." Coursing judges come in for

* The non-coursing reader may stare at the word weight; but dogs should be weighed in the scale to a pound, and their working weight as carefully ascertained and noted, as that of a prize-fighter or pedestrian is. Half a pound or a pound too much flesh on a dog will lose him a stake; and a pound and a half or two pounds renders him useless for some time.

a larger share of grumbling than most men. But, as a class, though few in number, their characters stand usually above suspicion. Indeed, it is naturally so, because their employment depends on their fairness. To be sure, we *have* heard of a coursing-judge who was not quite scrupulous, and who was, on an occasion, asked to decide a match. The match came on, and off, and the judge undecided it. Up marched one of the owners in great dudgeon to the judge, and, as soon as he could get a word aside with him, said, in a tone of great vexation:—

“Why, what the deuce made you undecide it, 'Arry? Didn't I send you as fine a haunch of mutton as ever you put your teeth in last night?”

“You did, my boy,” quoth the judge; “but so did he,” nodding towards the other opponent, who was displaying equal anxiety for a word with the judge—“so did he, and I weighed 'em both this morning, and, if you'll

believe me, there wasn't a pound difference between 'em either way—so what could I do?"

As a general rule, perhaps, the less judges mix with the company at the meetings they have to preside at, the better. For a judge, unknown to himself almost, may imbibe a prejudice over the dinner-table, and, with every desire to act fairly, may be influenced by his feelings, without knowing that he is so—at any rate, people are apt to think so.

Bess and Crow were in the slips, when Newton, looking into the distance, saw a lady and two gentlemen on horseback, and riding towards the crowd. As they drew nearer, he recognised his own roan mare, with Ned on her back. The lady was Mrs. Spelthorne, and the other gentleman Carysford.

"Ha!" thought Newton, "no wonder the roan wanted riding, and he couldn't drive.—Here comes Ned, with Mrs. Spelthorne and

Mr. Carysford," he continued, aloud, to the sisters. "Now, the question is, will you be introduced or not? I don't much like her, but that is nothing—Ned will want to introduce her, so you had better give the point half a minute's consideration while they ride towards us."

"Oh! I don't know; really, I think I'd rather not—what do you think, Charlotte?" asked Bessie.

"Why, not just at present, dear. I think we may as well put it off until she has been a little longer in the neighbourhood."

Ned came riding towards them in a quick trot, and offered, as Newton anticipated, to do the introduction; and the honor was declined for the present. Carysford and the lady rode by. She favoured the sisters with a stare, acknowledged Newton's bow; and after having chatted with his sisters a few moments, Ned rode after her, rather piqued at what he termed "his sisters' starchiness."

The dogs were off, and Newton saw Mrs. Spelthorne turn her horse's head towards them, and skim away over the turf like a bird, followed by the gentlemen. How well she rode, how gracefully she sat, her pliant figure accommodating itself instinctively to every motion of the well-bred animal she rode. In a few minutes they were out of sight. This was an extraordinary course in every way. The hare was an extremely good, stout hare; and for a long way she beat the dogs, and they could not fetch her at all. The judge was riding to the dogs, with one or two other gentlemen following him; and in the rear of all, came Mrs. Spelthorne, Carysford, and Ned.

At last the dogs came up, and suddenly the hare bolted into a little spinney, or, rather, narrow belt of plantation. The trees were too thick to ride through, and as the dogs were close on the hare, in all probability they would come out the other side; and there was an opening some fifty

or a hundred yards to the right, and a stiff fence to the left. The judge took for the opening, in order to ride round to the other side; and his followers all took the same direction, except Mrs. Spelthorne and *her* followers. The fence seemed to Mrs. Spelthorne a sort of challenge, which the other gentlemen had shirked, so she settled herself firmly, and went at it. Her horse took it like a cat, and cleared it neatly, and Carysford and Ned followed. But while the judge was working round to the other side of the plantation, puss popped back again on the same side she had entered, and took the dogs straight away, almost without a turn, in another direction; and thus the judge was completely thrown out, and the only people left to ride to the dogs were Mrs. Spelthorne, Carysford, and Ned; one other gentleman cut in afterwards, but after a smart gallop he soon tailed off. Away went the hare, and

away went the dogs. There was hardly any working, it was all racing.

There was no love lost between Ned and Carysford, of course. Ned hated Carysford, because he looked upon him as a rival, as regarded The Spelthorne. He would, if he could, cut him out in anything. Whilst Carysford plumed himself on his jockey and steeple-chase reputation, and hated to be out-riden or out-done in anything where horses were concerned. And Ned had youth, weight, and boldness in his favour; and, moreover, did not ride badly, and was as well, if not better mounted than Carysford; besides, being in love, he would have rushed at a ten-foot wall for a kind smile from the lady, who—an admirable horse-woman herself, was something of a judge of others—could appreciate good riding. Accordingly they took leap for leap, and raced with one another. The spirit of contest grew hot between them. Carysford's

brow lowered at finding how the young one stuck to him.

"Curse the young fool! I wish he'd break his neck," he muttered through his closed teeth.

Ned's eye brightened, his nostrils dilated, and his young lips were firmly closed, with an air of desperate determination. And when he caught a glimpse of the face he loved, turned towards him with a smile of approval at some daring leap well got over, he felt as if he could ride to the d——l, if she'd only lead the way.

Suddenly Carysford rose slightly in his stirrups and looked around.

"I thought I knew it," he said to himself.

Then he looked carefully ahead, and shouted to Mrs. Spelthorne, who was still leading.

"Hold hard, Poll, there's a chalk-pit there."

Mrs. Spelthorne just caught sight of it in time. It was the remains of an old one, half hidden by bushes; a rotten rail was its only protection. The part they were coming to was a sort of a bight, scooped out, as it were, from one side of the pit; at the mouth it was some twenty or twenty-five feet wide, and about the same depth—it narrowed, however, to perhaps a dozen on the right hand. It was towards this part Mrs. Spelthorne swerved, and with a sharp cut, she sprang over, lightly enough. Not so poor Ned, who was riding on her left a little behind, and in front of Carysford, who had pulled up.

“Come on!” shouted Ned, with a fierce joy in his eye, at the idea of his rival’s want of pluck being brought out under his mistress’s eye. “Come on, if you dare.”

“Break your neck, and be ——, if you will do it,” growled Carysford.

Ned rushed at the widest part, which lay straight before him. It was madness, as his horse was considerably blown. He felt himself going. There was a scramble, and—down they went, horse and man—crash.

Mrs. Spelthorne was off her horse in an instant. Carysford turned as pale as death, and looked on silently. She scrambled down amongst the bushes, calling him, “Teddy, Teddy—dear little Teddy! Good God! he’s killed!” and she turned fiercely towards Carysford, who stood on the brink of the chasm, looking down into it. “This is all your doing, you idiot—you fool;” and she shook her clenched hand at him. “If he’s dead, you shall rue it. Why do you stand there looking on? Come down and lend assistance. The horse is dead.”

Carysford came grumblingly down:—

“Don’t be a fool, Poll.”

“A fool!” repeated the lady; “I’ve

been a fool all my life, but never so great a fool as when I contracted a friendship for you. Thank heaven, he's not dead—only stunned. A little water, perhaps, will revive him. Undo his neckcloth, and hand me your spirit-flask—I know you never move without one," she said, with an accent of slight contempt. "There, that'll do. His arm hangs helpless; how long it seems! I hope and trust it is not broken. Get up to the top again, and see if you can see any one, and let them fetch a hurdle and carry him to the carriage on it—his sisters are there, and they will take care of him."

Carysford did as he was bid, and in a few minutes the judge and the field swept by. Assistance was lent, and, hardly recovered, but still dizzy from the effects of the fall, he was borne to the carriage. It was soon ascertained that no bones were broken; his left shoulder was badly

dislocated, and he was otherwise severely bruised ; still, under the careful nursing of his mother and sisters, a few days brought him round wonderfully. The dislocation was well and fortunately reduced, and brown paper and vinegar, until he looked, as Uncle Crabb said, "like a big brown-paper parcel," backed by a young and good constitution, did the rest.

The horse, however, a young and handsome roan mare, three parts blood, and which Newton had given a long price for, broke her neck in the fall.

Mrs. Spelthorne was constant in her inquiries, and "Mrs. Spelthorne's compliments, and would be glad to know how Mr. Edward is to-day," was better than all the doctors to Ned.

But we must return to the course, which, after the accident, was pursued by the hare and dogs unattended. Reaching the park palings, the hare slipped through

a hole, and the dogs topped the palings together. Out on the downs, she raced them straight away. She could not get away from the dogs, and the dogs could not catch her, strength and speed seemed so evenly balanced; and the course continued thus for a long, long way. The field and the judge lost them entirely, and never saw them again, nor were they heard of until two days after, when the dogs were found dead, one about ten or twelve yards in advance of the other, and the hare cold and stiff, within three yards of the foremost dog; the head of the dog being extended, almost as if he was in the act of throwing at her at the moment of death. They killed her, but they couldn't catch her.*

* The above smacks of the marvellous; but a course with a very similar result was witnessed by a gentleman of my acquaintance, some years ago, on the Leatherhead Downs.—AUTHOR'S NOTE.

CHAPTER III.

A PLOT ACCOMPLISHED.

"THE Chief has sent down this document to be copied. Be so good as to get it done at once, Mr. Cheelliwun, if ye please, as it is to be transmeitted this evening." And Mr. Jamieson, who was the head over Mr. Chilliwun's department, placed a formidable-looking official document into his hands.

The greater part of Mr. Chilliwun's eight thousand pounds had rapidly melted into thin air during his leave and the few weeks subsequent to it; he had returned once more to

quill-driving at the Redundancy, as he termed it. He had, however, since his recess, received a step up in his office, and was now second. Another gentleman, a quiet youth, one Mr. Markin, from the room below, having taken his place in due order.

“Going to dinner, eh?” asked Mr. Chilli-wun.

Mr. Jamieson nodded, and assumed his hat and stick.

“What an odd fellow you are, to dine so early.”

“It just agrees with me, Mr. Cheelliwun, and I like it.”

And Mr. Jamieson, who was a methodical Scotchman, went out saying:—

“Ye’ll just have that ready against my return.”

“I’ll do it at once,” and seizing his pen, he began to transcribe rapidly.

Mr. Chilliwun wrote a good, clear, clerkly hand—most stupid people do, somehow—and

he was deep in his work, when there came a tap at the door.

Mr. Chilliwn looked up.

"Come in," and a lady, deeply veiled and handsomely dressed, stood in the doorway.

"Oh! eh! how de do? take a seat, pray! Mr. Markin, may I trouble you to take that note *yourself* up to the Tape-and-wax office, and to wait for an answer," and Mr. Chilliwn hastily enclosed a paper in an envelope and gave it to Mr. Markin, who took it forthwith and departed.

The lady then threw up her veil, and displayed the lovely features of Madame Petrovich.

"I am here again, you see."

"It's very kind—oh! it's so kind of you, I'm sure, to come here so often. You can't think how I long to see you, and it is so kind, you know. But why can't I see you of an evening oftener.

“My friend, my dear friend, may I call you that?”

“Oh! you know you may, you know all my—that is, you know what I mean, you know, eh!—now don’t you?” and Mr. Chilli-wun gave a sickly half-smile, which was meant to express, and no doubt did, exceeding tenderness.

“I cannot see you in the evening, I am so closely occupied, and you would not deprive me of the pleasure of these few stolen moments,” and with a gentle, passing caress, she stroked the hair from off his forehead with her hand, advancing close to his chair as she did so, and *glancing over his shoulder at the papers on the table*. She turned slightly pale as she saw them.

“Oh! thank you! really! what a dear creechor you are, you know.”

“But now, I must not interfere with business, you know, I have a great *fureur* in what you call business, though I know nothing

of it, my dearest friend, nothing; and I desire you to rise to the head of your department, and after that to eminence. Thus you must continue, for I will not speak a word until it is done. You have a letter to write," and again she glanced shrewdly for a moment at the papers, as if scanning their import. "What *bêtise* matter you write here," and she put her finger on the paper and laughed; "see, (reading), is it not grave folly? But hasten, make an end, for I must talk to you; sit down and write—I will wait patiently—there," and she half pressed him into the chair; "hasten now, or your master, with the frightful Scotch name, will return, or that youth gone out may interrupt us."

"Not they," said Mr. Chilliwn, obediently resuming his pen, "Markin likes to go out on a message, and never hurries himself, and Jamieson won't be back this hour. He's always an hour and a-half at *his* dinner."

“Ah!” said Petrovich.

“Funny, isn’t it?—a fellow with his prospects and all that, dining in the middle of the day—at two o’clock, you know. That’s not the way we do it,” and he paused in his work.

“Ah! *continuez*. My time is short, and you would deprive me of a portion of these happy moments—no, hasten!” and she walked to the window, and looked out. There was a cab pacing slowly up and down on the other side of the street, and upon it her regards were fixed—a man was seated in it, and was looking up at the window. She glanced round at Mr. Chilliwun, who was now once more deep in his work, stole a look up at the clock, and then, looking towards the cab, nodded slightly and left the window. The cab passed on slowly a short distance, and then returned again, and so again. But she stood apparently scanning an almanack,

and glancing alternately from the clock to Mr. Chilliwn; and as minute stole on after minute, she appeared to grow uneasy, and cast a look or two of such impatient scorn and hatred at Mr. Chilliwn, that it was well he did not encounter them.

At length he gave a deep sigh as of relief, dotted the last i, crossed the last t, and scattering powder over the wet ink, pushed the papers aside, saying:—

“There, that confounded job is finished. Heigho! what a life it is—isn’t it? So different from the jolly times we had a month or two ago,” and taking the papers, he shoveled them into his desk and locked it. As he was doing so, Mrs. Spelthorne moved from before the almanack, paused before the window, *and passed her hand twice across her face, as she did so. The cab turned towards the door.*

“And now, dearest creechor, we can talk for half an hour or so without any

chance of interruption ;” and as she sat down, Mr. Chilliwun came and sat beside her, and placing his arm round her delicate waist, would have offered her a clumsy caress, but she drew back slightly, saying jestingly :—

“ Ah ! I fear you—not yet—*not yet.*”

“ ’Pon my soul now ! it’s cruel of you to keep me like this—me, who adores you beyond anything—me, who would jump into the Thames for you.”

“ Ah, my friend—dearest friend—we shall see and judge if you would do that.”

“ No, now ; but ’pon my word—’pon my soul, you know, you must just—” and he was about to repeat the effort, when a knock came at the door.

“ Hang it ! who’s that ?” and he moved hastily away, as Madame Petrovich drew down her heavy veil again.

“ Please sir,” said a porter, entering,

“there’s a gentleman below in a cab, who wants particularly to see you directly.”

“Well, shew him into the next room, James. Bother it, you know—there’s always something or another happening to worry and interrupt one,” he said aside to Madame Petrovich.

“The gentleman said he couldn’t come up, sir—would you please to go down?—it’s very particular—here’s the card.”

“Carysford, eh?” said Mr. Chilliwn, in surprise—“what can he want?”

“Ah! I remember—yes—I know he has something important—he mentioned it to me. Go, see him—I think he has a sprain of the foot. Poor fellow! he cannot surmount the stair,” and she continued in a lower whisper, “it is no matter, this interview—you can see me this evening instead, at Clarges Street. Now hasten, but say not to him *I* am here.”

“Very well, James, I’ll come immediately ;”

and James was about to go, when she said in an undertone to Mr. Chilliun—" You leave me here—pray do not let any one see me here. Have a care of my reputation. It is not pleasant to be looked on by a stranger. *Lock the door till you return to me.*"

" Don't be alarmed ; I'll take care of all that ;" and hastily writing on a card, " Gone out—back in ten minutes," he drew the key from his desk and put it in his pocket, hung his placard on the outside of the door, locked it on the outside, put that key in his pocket, too, and descended to his friend Mr. Carysford. Left alone, madame walked to the window, and saw Mr. Chilliun, after a minute or two, step into the cab, which immediately drew across to the other side of the way, and commenced slowly moving up and down, as it had done previously. What Mr. Carysford's business with Mr. Chil-

liwun was, matters not; it detained him for about twenty minutes.

On leaving the window, madame, who was now deadly pale, swept her veil from her face, and placing her hand in her bosom, drew forth a bright new key; applying it to the lock of Mr. Chilliwun's desk, she turned it, and the lock yielded with a sharp click, that shot through the now silent room so harshly, that she paused a moment, and looked round fearfully. Again she glanced at the clock, stepped to the door and listened a moment; all was still. Satisfied and reassured, she returned to the desk, threw open the lid, and grasping the papers just deposited within by Mr. Chilliwun, she took them out, placed them on the table, and spreading them before her, scanned their contents hastily, her face growing dark and darker as she did so. She turned the page, struck the paper fiercely with

her small, white, clenched hand, and then hastily opening a small reticule which she carried, took from its contents a little bottle, a camel-hair brush, and a bit of sponge, and deposited them on the table beside her. Taking then the original draft, she sat down, drew the stopper from the bottle, and dipping the brush into the liquid contained in it, carefully passed the brush over a word or two. Then taking the sponge, pressed it upon the spot, and on removing it, all trace of ink had disappeared. Next she brought from the small bag a little square match-box, and taking off the lid, struck a match, and held it under the lid until the metal was sufficiently heated, when she applied it to the paper long enough to dry it thoroughly. Taking next a pen, she carefully wrote a word or two in the blank space, imitating the hand-writing *à merveille*. Then reading it over, she powdered it carefully and set

it aside. She then drew the duplicate copy towards her, and proceeded with it in exactly the same manner, most successfully; and was just about to write in the words, when a step sounded on the landing, and some one advanced to the door and took hold of the handle. She rose hastily, ghastly pale, with her lips apart, shewing her gleaming white teeth, her large eyes distended with vivid terror; and scarce suppressing a scream, she gazed upon the handle of the door. It turned twice, and then was still. The door had not yielded, and she heard the person, whoever it was, read the placard, grumblingly turn away and go clump—clump—clump up stairs, until the sound of his footsteps died away on the upper story.

Her heart beat wildly, fearfully. She heard every stroke plainly, and each one seemed as if it would burst her bosom.

The pen had fallen from her hand and left a large blot upon the paper. She took up the pen, but her hand trembled so, that she could hardly hold it, and she laid it by, and once more had recourse to her bag; and uncorking a small silver flask, she applied it to her mouth, and drained it of its contents. Instantly she became calm again, her courage returned, and she set herself to the task of repairing her mishap. She blotted out the ink-stain, erased it with the fluid, dried the spot as before, and finally, carefully and precisely filled in the gaps, as in the former paper. Then powdering the ink, and seeing that all was finished, she replaced the papers in the desk as she had found them; locked it; returned the key to its resting-place; gathered up her materials. The forgery was complete. The point which had engaged her attention for weeks was accomplished.

After looking round the room to see

that all was in its place, and nothing forgotten, with a haughty, scornful smile, with the colour once more in her cheek, she walked to the window, looked out once more, passed her hand twice across her face, then sat down, and opening a book, rested her brow upon her hand, as if absorbed in reading. In a few minutes Mr. Chilliwn returned, looking rather perplexed and vexed.

“Hang it, you know! What a long-winded feller that Carysford is—thought I should never get away. But now, I say, dearest creechor—now, I say, won’t you—can’t you—just, eh?”

She rose.

“Ah! wicked one! What would you?” You have been long away—hours—years. I must go from you, but remember to-night, and stooping her face, as he sat, she kissed him lightly on the brow, saying, “You are a veritable *ange*, and you have

earned it. Your friends return directly, and they must not find me here. *Au revoir.* To-night, you must not come. I know the passage, and I must go unseen. Carysford or some one may meet us. No, no, again, —*au revoir.*” And once more letting down her veil, ~~she~~ disappeared, while Mr. Chilliwn threw himself back in his chair in a tumultuous rapture of delight.

“A veritable *ange!* Oh, by Jove, that’s strong for her, you know. A veritable *ange!* Oh, it’s all up with her at last; and oh! if she only will—won’t we be jolly? but here’s old Jamieson coming. I’ll just go and have five minutes now in the park, and smoke a weed to shake myself together a bit.” Mr. Jamieson entered as Mr. Chilliwn was taking the papers from his desk.

“Oh, ye’ve finished the draft—eh, Mr. Cheeliwn?”

“Ah, there it is, all right—a regular

specimen of my handwriting, *after* six lessons by Stiggins, or whatever his name is, who does those thingumbobs. I say, if you don't want me, I'll just run out for ten minutes—not more.” And taking silence for consent, he put on his hat and swaggered down stairs as if he were treading on air.

Mr. Jamieson slowly glanced down the duplicate copy, rubbed his eyes, looked again :—

“’Deed, there’s some error a thenk,” and he referred to the original draught.

“No—it’s verra curious—I must e’en have been deceived—ah, weell, a must have been thenkin of something else, a suppose,” and he slowly enclosed the duplicate in a huge official envelope, and sealed it with the office seal.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OUTWARD BOUND.

WAR, which had been long threatening, at length broke out. The invasion of Turkey had been followed up by the massacre of Sinope, during which, as the Blue Books shew, our best energies were employed in pinioning our ally with a species of fetter called "moral support," and holding him down while his enemy *tried* to kick him. But it would not do. Our ally got a little free at last, and began thrashing his and our foe very handsomely, as Citate,

Oltenitza, Silistria, and other minor engagements, which took place about and subsequently to that period, abundantly shew.

Englishmen, as they always do, when talking what they *call* foreign politics, talked in leading strings the solemn twaddle which was put into their mouths by certain newspapers, which are supposed to write on authority. All sorts of absurdities were advanced, asserted, and asseverated with vehemence, without the asseverators having any shadow of proof beyond mere newspaper gossip and club *gobemoucherie*. If one ventured to doubt some extraordinary assertion, reviling was as certain to follow, as was rage if you could manage to (which you generally could) prove the gossips ill-informed or falsely loaded.

It was a great time for the gossips, who amounted to about twenty-six millions, nine hundred, and ninety-nine thousandths out

of the nation. Every mail gave them a delicious disaster or a new phrase. Never was such a feast of phrases. What a curious sensation would he not have felt, could a philosopher from some other sphere have been suddenly plunged amongst us, and heard the self-sufficient so-called politician (though what a politician is, I'm sure I don't know, unless every man be a politician) roll off his tongue with intense relish, like a boy with a new toy, the latest acquisition in the shape of ultimatums, material guarantees, moral supports, occupations, interventions, armed neutralities, &c., &c.

They took several lessons in geography, too, from distinguished foreigners, who, of course, did not fail to charge pretty heavily for those lessons; and the map-makers prospered. But very few could be said to know anything really of either Russia or Turkey; and the rest of the

nation was getting up the subject by reading shilling "Scampers through Constantinople," eighteenpenny "Marches to Moscow" and "Pilgrimages to Petersburg," and that style of literature which the modern English rejoice in; and all sorts of absurdities were promulgated and believed in consequence. The enemy of Turkey had styled her "the sick man;" he knew well the value of a phrase. We jumped at it and swallowed it as a child does bull's-eyes, and in so doing lent ourselves to the design of its contriver, which of course was the eventual swallowing of the sick man himself. The first and manifest result of this dose was: "What chance has Turkey with Russia, sir? Good Ged, sir! why, Russia can eat her. Look at her hunderd million thousand troops, sir!"—"Demme, sir! Poland and 'Ungary, sir." "Odesser and

Sebasterpool, sir. Rule Britannia! *We'll* go and help her, sir. *We'll* teach the Russian bear to pitch into *our* ally. Wait till *our* fleet gets there. Blow the Czar out of water, sir." "Aldiborontifosti-forni-ostikos, abracadabara, gammon and spinnach, hullabaloo"—and so forth.

Undoubtedly there was a hatred of Russia, but it was a blind and indiscriminating hatred. There was also pity for Turkey, and a desire to help her against her foe; but it was not guided nor tempered by any real knowledge of how we could best help her, and the very first move we made—nay, the very correspondence before any move was made on our part—shewed that the whole affair was going to be what gentlemen of pugilistic tendencies term a "Barney" or cross, and yet cross is not the proper term, and there is only one word for it in the whole English slang vocabulary, and that is the

one we have used. It was a Barney*—unmistakably a Barney—comprising several minor incidental Barneys ; all making one grand disastrous spectacle, with sham blockades, sham bombardments, sham expeditions, sham operations, sham Chelsea Boards, sham Generals, and sham heroes, decked in exploited laurels (the real ones dying at their posts), all complete. Followed with real negotiations and real loss. Undoubtedly, we say again, there was hatred for Russia and sympathy for Turkey (the situation required it), without any real appreciation of the true position of either. Englishmen, whilst they talked of the strength of Russia and the weakness of Turkey, entirely forgot, or rather ignored, the

* This word is not perhaps so modern as telegram, but yet it is modern. Our ancestors did not know it, but then they did not know either the practice which it represents. Truly are its words the indicators of a nation's progress or decline.

price of the rouble at the commencement of the war, and the question of how Russia was to carry on aggressive war without money, or any visible means of raising it.* They knew nothing of the

* How she did raise the money to commence the war is strange enough. She borrowed the money, giving for security the "Russo-Dutch Loan," a species of tribute which we continue to pay to Russia *after the Crown lawyers have declared the payment of it illegal*. Of course this was but doubtful security, which we might discontinue paying at any moment; but our Government *guaranteed it*, and with this money, which we voluntarily made Russia a present of, she put her troops in motion, and crossed the Pruth to attack our ally. Furthermore, as Russia was in effect bankrupt at the commencement of the war, and is now tolerably well off, as the price of her securities shews, the agreeable fact forces itself upon us, that Russia has positively saved herself and made money out of us by the war. This sounds strange enough; such, however, is the fact; and it may be easily understood, if the care with which we protected her trade for her, at our own expense, be considered, and the statistics of her trade during the war, and the three or four years previous to it, be looked into. Is there nothing in all this to alarm Englishmen for the consequences?

reforms 'for the consolidation of her empire carried out in Turkey, and spontaneously commenced by her about the period of the Greek war; or how, when even at her very worst, as it might be expected, with these reforms first agitating her—when Russia, having for years been preparing for war with Turkey, and having plunged Turkey into a seven years' war with Greece by her intrigues—having also cut off Egyptian aid from her by the presence of the allied fleets, and having by the same means annihilated her fleet at Navarino—when, we say, Turkey being, as it may fairly be supposed, by all these means much exhausted, Russia went to war with her herself, with an immense force, and was worsted both in the first and in the second campaigns,

If such things be, let them ask themselves the question, how and where it is to end?

when it was life or death with her, and she put her whole lifeblood into the effort, she could not bring to Adrianople more than seven thousand sickly troops; where, unable to retreat, and afraid to expose the weakness of the army before Constantinople, it was saved by lies, and a treaty of the most shameful and disastrous kind forced upon Turkey by the intercession and through the medium of the then British Ambassador there. All this, we say, was ignored, or rather, being really modern history—indeed, the history of their own times—Englishmen knew nothing whatever about it; and thus they still insisted that Russia could devour Turkey (who had a fine fleet and army, and was unembarrassed in money matters) and would devour Turkey, if we did not interfere.

However, as we have before said, in spite of our holding them down and keep-

ing them back, the Turks began thrashing the Russians in the most handsome and workmanlike manner. This wouldn't do at all. They couldn't *go on* thrashing the Russians like this, unless we afforded them *moral support*—that was the phrase employed. “The presence of our troops would animate them—would, ah—do, ah—no end of good, sir.” So war was declared at last, and our troops were sent boldly at once to Gallipoli, where they would be at the farthest possible point from the scene of action, and landed there, instead of in the rear of the Russians; and the French constructed fortifications, although there was no enemy there, nor any probability of one, save, it might be, Turkey herself; and this was called defending Constantinople from Russia—which it might very properly be, if the Russians could have been expected, by any means, to attack Constantinople from the Mediter-

anean. But this, being purely a geographical question, was unworthy of consideration. Still the Turks thrashed the Russians, and there was a greater need than ever of moral support. So, having found out which was the most unwholesome town in Turkey, and then which was the most unwholesome locality about the unwholesome town, and, above all, which was the deadliest spot in all that unwholesome locality, we administered a strongish dose of moral support, by sending the army there, and encamping the choicest of our troops on the deadliest spot.

It can only be supposed that the army wanted something to do, and sickness was considered the best thing to employ it with; and, all means of action or motion being carefully removed, or rather not provided, it was thus employed, and thousands of our brothers, sons, and bravest defenders were basely, foully, cruelly, and treacherously

poisoned and murdered there,* and their blood still cries to Heaven for the justice we have failed to render.

In spite of the depressing nature of such moral support as this from their ally, the Turks drove the Russians out of the Principalities; and by a further grand exertion of moral support, they were prevented from following up the defeat and completing the noble wreath of laurels their valour and patriotism had gained; and the whole fruits of the campaign, from solid gains were turned into Dead Sea fruits, and moral power gained a complete victory, as the beaten Russians marched away unmolested and in good order for the Crimea; where, having been carefully re-organised and strengthened, we had to fight them over again.

* It amounts to nothing less, because the Government had actually examined several authorities on the subject.

At this period of the war, Captain Stevens's regiment received orders for Cork ; and finding nothing ready to take them at Cork, they remained kicking their heels there for a week or two, when they were ordered to Liverpool, and arrived there minus the greater part of their baggage and some of their horses, which, coming by some other way, never arrived at all ; after which, having passed another week or two doing nothing at Liverpool, they were hurried off for Southampton, where, after a further period of delay, they had a steamer allotted to them. Alas ! alas !

The Guards had marched out of London, and their Queen, in common with hundreds of her sex, had wept over them. The Line had marched, too. Hands were shaken, and if hearts beat quickly and eyes were wet, yet was there a high feeling of military enthusiasm in every breast. The City clerk or apprentice shouldered his stick or his yard-measure,

and burned with military fire. Rifle-clubs innumerable were planned and proposed ; regiments were sketched out ; private gentlemen, retired officers, and noblemen offered to raise regiments—some, at their own cost, and some, at a very small expense. And if ever a country went to war with high hopes, great aspirations, and honest wishes, to be dammed by ignorance and treachery, England did in this instance.

Alas ! that it should have allowed all this to be checked and thrown back upon itself. The Government not only refused all these offers of assistance, but actually snubbed those who offered them. At least twenty regiments of volunteers—picked men—might have been raised ; and those who offered to raise them, and who, in years gone by, would have received all honours and titles for doing so, had the cold shoulder turned to them, and saw a Foreign Legion Bill hurried through the House.

They saw, moreover, honours and titles conferred on those who did nothing and on those who did far worse than nothing, and the patronage of the Court misdirected by the Government. They saw this followed up by the awful, the terrible, the horrible winter before Sebastopol—a passage of time, which, as long as England lasts, will be the deepest stain upon her scutcheon, and a curse upon her brow. And if ever there was an iniquitous and a treacherous Government—if ever there was a Government in the world that stood red-handed before the eye of heaven—if ever there was a Government which deserved to expiate its crimes upon a scaffold—that Government was the Government of England during the late so-called *Russian* war; and whilst the nation punishes not the misdeeds then committed in its name, and humbles not itself in sackcloth and ashes for its share in them, it stands, in the

eye of all divine and human law, as the accomplice of the Government.

It is convenient enough, probably, to men of elastic consciences, who would blind themselves to the unpleasant fact that they have a distinct share of responsibility, a distinct amount of sin to answer for, allotted to them from this matter, to call these deeds mistakes. Mistakes are crimes in such cases. Was Sinope a mistake? Was Devna a mistake? Was Sebastopol a mistake? Was Simpson a mistake? The sham-blockades mistakes? The Baltic campaigns mistakes? The White Sea humbug a mistake? Was Kars—fatal Kars—where the Turks were at length “calmed by a defeat,”—a mistake? And, lastly, the deadly blow to our naval power, dealt in the yielding up of the right of search,—was that, too, a mistake?

If so, then there is in the world no

such thing as crime at all—no such thing as principle—no such thing as punishment or reward for the evil and the good. It is all a mistake. A burglary is a mistake, a murder is a mistake, and felonies of all kinds are henceforth mistakes? The ties of international law, and subsequently of society, are done away with, and no one can be held responsible or accountable for his deeds.

Our indignation, however, has run us to the extreme end of its tether; and to continue repeating what all Englishmen know, or ought to know, and, at the same time, don't wish to know, and desire to forget, is mere hammering upon a bare anvil.

There was a great bustle in the streets of Southampton. Troop after troop of cavalry rode slowly through the town, with flags flying and music playing; many an eye was bright, since dim and dead—many a strong heart beat bravely, that is now

still and pulseless. Through the old Bar, with its quaint lions and flags, filed troop after troop, tramp-tramp over the stones, with the music echoing from wall to wall, from house to house. Bold and noble faces were turned from side to side, nodding to friends they might see no more; and over all rang the hearty cheering of those they were leaving at home. Sturdy and grimy forms ran beside the horses.

“Good bye, Jack.”—“Good bye, Joe.”—“Good bye.”—“Good bye.”—“Keep up your pecker, Tom, and write soon.”—“All right, old fellow.”—“Give it to the &c., &c., &c. Russians, Bill.”—“Tell Molly I’ll send her a line by the first mail. And I say, Ned, tell her there’s tenpence left at Old Shearer’s towards Billy’s new trowsers.”—“Kiss the boy, Bet.”—“Good bye! good bye!—hurrah! hurrah” Tan-ta-ra-ra went the trumpets, rattle-brattle went the drums, and the houses, streets, and alleys rang

again. Handkerchiefs waved by scores and hundreds, and cheers and tears were intermingled freely.

They reached the quay at last. All the vessels not about to sail immediately were crowded with spectators. One after the other, the horses were got on board. The men followed, the last adieu was spoken, and the last cheer came faintly over the water, as the hoarse monster puffed and panted away with its cargo of warriors, full of human hopes and fears. The last handkerchief is waved, and nought but the smoke of the far-distant vessel, hanging like a lowering fate upon the air, could be seen.

“Don’t cry, dear. Think how beautiful and noble he looked, riding out to battle for his Queen, his country, his right, and his honour. Think of his return, covered with the decorations his valour and prowess have won—and he will win them.”

"Ah, Bessie! you are too sanguine; he may never return again;" and a burst of tears followed, as Charlotte hid her face in her younger sister's bosom.

"Hope for the best, love, and trust in Heaven to guard him. It is his duty to go, and you would not have him forfeit it."

"No, no, no, dearest, I could not love him as I do, if he did."

"There, then, there;" and nursing her elder sister as if she were a little child, Bessie soothed and encouraged her, as the carriage rolled slowly back along the now almost deserted streets.

They had come to Southampton with Uncle Crabb and Ned to see Captain Stevens off. And he went with a swelling heart, for he loved Charlotte dearly, very dearly; all his fine nature, and the feelings of his noble heart—and it was a noble heart—were compressed into his

passion. He thought not of what lay before him; he had a soldier's carelessness as to what might be his own fate. But all his thoughts were on her he left behind; and at that moment he had no room for any other, but stood looking towards the shore, where he had seen her last, long, long after it was out of sight.

From time to time they heard of him and from him; his name was mentioned in the papers. He was in the terrible battle of Balaklava, and with his comrades swept through the Russian cavalry like a thunderbolt, cutting through and through it as though men and horses were but thin shocks of corn. With two sweeps of his practised and powerful arm, one Russian dragoon fell reeling from his saddle, and the head of another was almost severed from his body. They were nearly surrounded at one moment, but again they wheeled and charged; and coming too

closely in contact with an officer, whom he supposed to be the Colonel of the Dragoons, to use his sword effectually, he struck him from his horse, stunned with one straightforward blow from the hilt of his sword. They were given up for lost, so great were the odds against them, but in a few seconds they again appeared, driving the discomfited Russians over the plains, broken and routed before them in all directions. This was the only action his regiment was engaged in during the war; but, nevertheless, as a volunteer, he bore his share at Inkerman, and took on himself other hazards and duties—not perhaps strictly necessary; but he was not a man to be idle in his profession, when others were employed, if he could help it.

How anxiously his letters were looked for at Crookham by the sisters, it need not be said.

“Thank Heaven, he is still well and unwounded, dear,” Charlotte would say, after glancing down the just-received letter—when she would hurry away to read it fully again and again by herself. They were to have been married, had not the war “broken” out (or rather, crawled out of the slime which engendered it). But he could not sacrifice his duty to his feelings—so the ceremony was perforce delayed until his return home.

Meantime, Ned had recovered, and all went on at Crookham much as usual. Mr. Dogvane had given a grand house-warming dinner, and Mrs Dogvane’s “ear did seriously incline” to Mr. Sharp and his sisters, and the Reverend Cecil Courtenay might be seen now and then at Dingham.

All this, of course, was intensely annoying to Newton, who detested the Reverend Cecil with a fervent detestation; and yet, he was in a measure forced upon

him. He saw him installed at Dingham, through the weakness of his mother. He saw him gradually, in spite of Uncle Crabb's dislike, and the general feeling of disfavour upon the part of others of the family, gradually creeping in and feeling his way carefully amongst the inmates of Crookham. The fact was, no one liked to grieve Bessie, who, although she did not exactly like him, had so great a reverence for his office, that she at first bore with him; and the reverend Cecil was not a man to neglect his opportunities, but took every method of conciliating and smoothing away, as far as lay in his power, the difficulties he met with.

Bessie met him about at several of his old pensioners, to whom he seemed kind; and she became accustomed to him after a time. They had few visitors, and he knew how to suit his conversation to everyone; he knew exactly how to interest them; no

one could doubt but he was an able tactician. Mrs. Bowers, by habit and association, and through love for her children, gradually softened to him. Charlotte was just in the frame of mind which led her to long for some sort of sympathy, for some one to talk cheerily to her upon the matters she best liked to hear. The Reverend Cecil had travelled in the East, and so his conversation and anecdote, &c., became by degrees amusing, and something to be looked for in that dull time, even by Mr. Bowers. Oh! he knew well how to flatter, how to sooth and interest. No one better; and what surprised them the most was, that he seldom or never referred in any way to his calling or his objects therein. No, no, he was far too cunning for that; it was only when Bessie would sometimes refer some point or scruple to him that he had an opportunity of doing that; and even then he did it so reasonably,

and so without any appearance of pushing his own peculiar views, that no one could find fault with him, and by degrees the family began to think they had entirely mistaken their man.

All this was completely maddening to Newton, who knew not where to have him, he was so circumspect; and consequently his dislike and antagonism, apparently so unreasonable, with a slight ebullition of temper, always beautifully managed by his clever foe to Newton's disfavour and his own advantage, only made things worse.

Once or twice Newton spoke to Ned on the matter, who only replied with an incomprehensible chuckle:—

“Oh, never mind. . Let him alone—let him alone. He'll begin to shew his claws by-and-by; it isn't in the cat's nature to keep them long concealed, and then *I'll* fix his flint for him.”

But this did not suit Newton. He would .

have preferred extracting the Reverend Cecil's claws before he had an opportunity of shewing them; but it was useless, and one day, when he had been almost bearish to him, Bessie was so sharp and haughty about it, Mr. Bowers mildly remonstrating with him as well, that he went home in a woeful state of mind, and tried to stay away a whole week, but failed, and having occupied an entire night and part of a day in proving that he ought *not* to go, and *wouldn't* go, he got up and went the next morning with a message (which he artfully extracted from his mother) to Mrs. Bowers. And when Bessie shewed an inclination to give him a little opportunity of reconciliation and peace-making, he perversely declined, with a forced laugh, the very thing he had come over to effect and had been scheming how to bring about for two whole days — two dismal, wretched days — and

then went home to be miserable for two more.

The meantime, the Reverend held his ground firmly and fortified it strongly. He was looked upon now (with the exception of Uncle Crabb) by the whole family as a regular and friendly visitor. Then as an adviser and mentor; and at length the little difficulties of each were accustomed to be referred to him, and then from one thing to another he went on, until he became quite an authority in the house. And it was "the Reverend Cecil says this, and the Reverend Cecil says that—and he advises this, that, and the other, or, I'll ask Mr. Courtenay when he comes!" and so on. And finally, the least shadow of religious disquisition somehow crept in. Uncle Crabb grinned and slapped his thigh when he heard the first faint breath of it. But he grew troubled when he saw a species of

shadow creeping over the spirits of the once happy family. There was a something—he could hardly analyse it—which he knew was the Reverend Cecil's doing, and which somehow checked the free, open, joyous intercourse of old, and he began to get very uneasy at it.

Ned had always kept out of the Reverend Cecil's way as much as possible; but he saw that Bessie was becoming unhappy, and looked pale, dispirited, and anxious. This wouldn't do at all; the whole family seemed changing. It must be stopped. A crisis must come, and it came.

Mr. Bowers had never in any way interfered with his son's amusements, and provided his expenditure was not too lavish, put but little check upon it. But of late he began to look unpleasantly, closely into both. Not that he was parsimonious, but he got it into his head

somehow that it was not right, and must be stopped—and one day he refused him a cheque.

Ned *had* drawn rather freely of late, and his father began questioning him rather closely about a certain lady we are acquainted with.

Ned flushed up.

The Reverend Courtenay was sitting on the lawn, just outside the window, pretending to read a book, but glancing in at father and son.

“May I ask, sir,” said Ned to his father, “who told you that I was making these presents, with any such objects, with regard to the lady you speak of?”

“I—a—I am not, sir, a—at liberty to inform you—nor—a—do I recognise the right of a son to question his father, sir,” stammered the old gentleman, who felt he was not quite in a right position.

“My dear father,” said Ned, “pray do

not imagine I should dream of asking it as a right—far from it—I ask it as a favour. You, surely, will give me your authority?”

“I—that is—no, I cannot,” answered his father, rather moved.

“No matter; I know perfectly well who he is,” he replied, as he caught a glimpse of the Reverend Cecil’s countenance looking in at the window, over the top of his book, with a grim smile. “But I would rather have had the confirmation of it from your own lips—no matter. Now to deal with this nameless slanderer;” and he turned towards the window, and threw it open.

“Ned! Ned! What are you about?”

But Ned had slipped out, and walking up to the Reverend Cecil, he said, briefly and haughtily:—

“A word with you, sir.”

The Rev. Cecil saw from his face that

it was no trifling matter, and Ned would not be denied; so he rose and walked with him in the direction of the shrubbery. As they were proceeding to it, they met, and passed, Newton. Ned nodded shortly to him, and Newton stood transfixed with amaze for a moment. A few minutes afterwards, he heard Ned's force gradually rising, and caught his final words.

“And if you do not leave this parish within the week, sir, I will publish it all over the county, and will take the proper steps for laying the matter before your Bishop. I don't know that I have any right to let you off as it is; however, the fault is mine. But you have your choice, and thank your stars that you *have* your choice. And now be so good as to retire by that gate, and not to shew your face in this house again.”

Newton was walking out of earshot, when he saw the Rev. Cecil sneaking,

rather chap-fallen and undignifiedly, out of the gate. A few moments after, Ned joined Newton.

“ I say,” quoth Ned, “ doesn’t the air seem clearer ? What a change six weeks has made in the house under that fellow’s management ; but, thanks be, he is gone, and I have started him.”

“ So I heard ; but how ? Whence your magic influence ? ”

“ Never mind—I promised him I wouldn’t divulge it to a soul. Ah,” continued Ned, half to himself. “ People should be very careful of their doings when they have moles under their ears, and they should square the driver when they hire a job brougham. But never mind.”

This, of course, was mystery to Newton ; possibly it may be to the reader. One thing was very certain—the Rev. Cecil came not to Mr. Bowers’ again, and in spite of the most curious questioning on

the part of the family, who soon recovered their old ways and looks again, when the cause of their change was removed, Ned kept his secret religiously ; whilst the Rev. Cecil, giving up the cure of souls in the plural, applied himself to the cure of his own singular soul, and went on a visit to a distant cousin in Wales for a twelvemonth or so. Accordingly another filled his place, and although as thick a veil as could be interposed between him and scandal was interposed, rumour, with her thousand tongues, would not be staved off. His departure had been too sudden for that, and one or two trifling revelations in money matters, not greatly to his credit, came out, and became, of course in a magnified form, the village talk ; and none were more bitter and virulent in their gossip, or post-propheied their convictions more loudly and vehemently, that “ this would be the end of it all,” than

Mr. Tom Sharp (minus his sacerdotal waistcoat) and his sisters (minus their anticipated prey, the pet parson).

Crookham was none the worse for the exchange, for the curate, Mr. Beeklamb, who came to do the duties, was a meek, charitable, washed-out little individual, very mild, very weak, with no particular leanings and no particular sentiments, troubled with a gasping, perspiring way of speaking, that reminded you of a dying gold-fish ; but there was a deal of good in him, and if he had only possessed a little energy and decision, he might have done great things. As it was, he procured the love, but then obtained the pity too, of the poor, who spoke of him protectingly rather than otherwise.

But we are anticipating again, and must go back.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

It was a fine morning, late in June; the weather was warm and beautiful; the trees had put on their summer tints; the laverock (we prefer the Scotch name, it seems more expressive) was singing high in the heavens; the air and the earth, the trees and the waters, were instinct with insect life. Bees went humming on their daily round, peering into the flowers, which abounded, of every kind and hue; painted butterflies of various sorts skipped up and down in the air, now from flower to leaf, anon careering high over

the grass, across the fields, and far away; grasshoppers hopped about your knees as you brushed through the ripe grass, upon which the mowers and haymakers were already commencing their cheerful labours, and sending delicious fragrance far and wide through the air. Swallows skimmed to and fro, now over the grass, now dodging in and out round the trees, then drooping and dipping their wings in the stream as they picked some errant fly almost from its surface. The deep foliage of the trees whispered happiness and peace; at one moment almost hushed, and presently swelling gradually, as the light breeze kissed and rustled through it, till it joined audibly in the swelling and universal chant of gladness and praise to heaven. Man fought—but nature worshipped.

Newton was leaning on the low stone wall of the little bridge, over which the high-road crossed the stream. A fishing-rod leant against the stone at his side; the foot-line and

fly hung carelessly in the stream, sweeping to and fro in the swift current.

Newton had taken to fly-fishing under Mr. Buncomb's tuition; and, with an occasional lesson from Sir John Vasey, who was an ardent admirer of the truly gentle craft, he was rapidly becoming tolerably proficient. Sir John had given him a general permission to fish in his portion of the river—part of which, but it was only thinly stocked with fish, thanks to the poachers, ran through his father's estate—with only the sportsmanlike restriction that he should not fish after dark, nor kill fish under a pound and a-half weight; a judicious rule, and one which all owners of trout streams, if they desire good trout, would do well to observe strictly.

As Newton looked over, he saw two or three highly respectable trout sunning themselves and watching for food; sometimes one or the other of them would rise slowly to the surface, and just show his white upper-lip on

its level, as he sucked in a savoury insect; and again another would turn sharply round and make a short dart of a yard or so at some inconsiderable straw, or other matter that floated down the stream, but, finding he had been deceived, and that the matter was not a comestible, he would turn again, in apparent disgust, and slowly resume his station, waving his tail as a coy beauty does her fan, with an air of depreciation of such a piece of deceit on the part of the straw. Now one would be lost under a long streaming weed, and another would dash up under the shade of the pier of the bridge, as if he intended taking it by storm; and another, the biggest of course—it is always so, even with fishes—would make an aside at one of the others, who, in his turn, would make an aside rush at the next smallest one; but by degrees they all resumed their places.

“There’s a good fish rising down under that bank,” said Newton to himself. “I

wish I could hook him, Buncomb," he continued aloud to that individual, who was standing at a little distance, staring up into the air, apparently at nothing. Buncomb, they seem sick of March browns, blue duns, and grannums; what's to be done? When do you think the May-fly will be up?"

"Well, sir, I never knowed it so late as it is this year. We're always latish with it here, seldom much afore the middle of June, and here we are at t'other end on't, and haven't got it yet. The season is certainly wery backward. But there," he continued, "I could almost swear I see one just this werry hinstinck (instant), Muster Dogwun; I were a lookin' arter him. It must a bin 'the fly.' If so, it'll be on a little t'ords hevenin'—not enough to take, perhaps; but t'morrer it'll be a grand day."

"Ah, but to-morrow's the archery meet-

ing, and I've promised Bess—I mean Mrs. Bowers—a brace of trout to-day. What's to be done?"

"Don't know, sir; trouts is rum things in their appetikes; they're like fimmuls (females); sometimes they will, and sometimes they wulln't. Have ye tried the willow, or the black gnat; either on em's likely. Furnace 'ackle, alder, caperer, stone-fly, sand, councillor, guvnor, duns o' all sorts, or red hen,—it's all alike, any on em's likely. Little yaller ort to be on. There's one on the water now, and, by Jabez, that big chap's took him. See now; ye han't got one, in course not. Give me one o' them big May-flies; I'll soon cut him up and shift him on to a smaller 'ook;" and, taking a hook and a piece of gut, Mr. Buncomb, by the aid of a pen-knife, proceeded to construct a little yellow May-fly,—a fly which, on many rivers, comes on immediately before

the green drake. It was soon finished. It was rather a rough, staring concern, of course ; but it looked like killing in the water.

“ Wait here, and if a gentleman comes by on horseback — darkish-looking man, with moustachios and beard, and all that— just tell him I’m over the hedge. It’s almost time Vincent was here,” said Newton to himself, after giving these directions to Buncomb, as he stepped over the stile with his newly-armed rod. Approaching the stream cautiously, and bending down to keep as much as possible out of sight, with a wave he sent the dangerous lure, with some lightness and tolerable precision, out into the stream, just above where the largest of the fish he had seen from the bridge lay. It came sweeping round, backing and filling with its hackle and wings, as Newton softly checked and yielded to it. Now was the anxious moment—it was

passed in front of his nose. A slight curl in the water, and Trouty was off up under the bridge—he wasn't to be gammoned to his own undoing.

“Confound him!” said Newton, “he’s a two-pounder; but there’s his brother below, let’s try him.”

The same process was gone through again a few yards further down, and this time with ample success. Up came the speckled victim, with a dash, a smart tug, and away he went, running, rushing amongst weeds, shaking his head, and springing out of his native element, as if he were a little salmon.

Great, of course, was Newton’s excitement. Oh, how exciting it is—a well-conditioned two or three pounder on fine tackle, in a clear, rapid, and weedy stream! But his doom was soon sealed.

Mr. Buncomb came crawling along with the landing-net; dipped it; and, after

another slight rush and turn or two, the fish dropped neatly into the net, and then dropped out of it on the grass, under two pair of admiring eyes.

“Famous condition—two pound and a little over, eh, Buncomb?”

“All that, sir!” quoth that functionary, “and a little over; werry yellow, werry speckled, and wot’s more, werry white, and well-shaped, sir. He’ll do;” and Mr. Buncomb knocked the fish on the head, and put it in the basket, saying:—

“That’s one.”

“Where shall we try for another, Buncomb?” asked Newton.

“Just below that ’ere willer, sir. There’s a brace o’ werry tidy fish there, as’ll go nigh three pounds—over two and a ’af leastways.”

Newton walked to the indicated spot, and there was a good fish making circles with tolerable rapidity. Newton tried him.

He came up and refused. He was going to throw again in haste.

“Easy, sir,” said Buncomb. “Now lie yer rod down for five or ten minutes, and practise patience. Light a veed and smoke. It’s not a morsel o’ use fishin’ for him yet, he’s scared a bit; but wait a little while, and p’r’aps you’ll nail him.”

Newton followed the advice, and lighted a cigar.

“Look ye now,” presently said Mr. Buncomb. “There’s a cloud a comin’ over the sun, and the least mite of ripple comin’ up stream; chuck just arter the ripple reaches him, and I’ll lay a new ’at to a gooseberry bush you ’as him.”

Out went the fly again; round it came cautiously — cautiously, just under the pendent wreaths of leaves, which almost kissed the stream, as if it had just slid down off them, and up came the trout,

this time in right earnest. The usual jumping and rushing ensued.

"Don't let him get under that willer, sir."

The fish was making for his haunt. Newton "put the pot on," as it is called, and turned him, and in due time he visited the basket.

As they walked along the stream, back towards the bridge, to see if the first fish had returned to his feeding-ground, they heard the canter of a horse approaching.

"I'll bet that's Vincent; run up and stop the gentleman, Buncomb," said Newton; and in a minute or two Newton was shaking hands with Vincent Sartoris.

"How are they all?" asked Vincent, who, by-the-by, had been down both to Dingham and Crookham since we last mentioned him. "How are they all? I

shan't be able to stop over to-morrow ; I'm busy about the Turkish Contingent business ; and that takes up all my time almost."

"What a bore, to be sure !"

"You are very kind, to say so ; but business, you know, must be attended to. Of course it's all very pleasant leading a kind of *dolce far niente*—*al fresco* life here, lying down on the grass, and watching you catch the little fish, and the smoke of my pipe curling up into the air, to the intense disgust of the gnats and blue-bottles — alternately. It won't do for me altogether. But don't let me stop your fishing—pray, go on."

"I was thinking how we could manage to realise the pipe and the fishing, &c. Look here—I have it—Buncomb, get on Mr. Sartoris's horse, and ride him to the stables. Tell James that Mr. Sartoris

has arrived, and that his room is to be prepared. On the way, as you pass Crookham, drop that brace of fish, with my compliments. There, give Mr. Sartoris the landing-net—I've no doubt but he'll make a good fist at it—and you can meet me at the stile beyond the wood-cock-spinney."

Mr. Buncomb did as he was desired, and rode away. Vincent sat himself down on the grass, and, pulling out his pipe, was soon engaged in puffing round rings into the air. The fish would not rise, so Newton stuck his rod upright, and sat down beside Vincent.

After a few minutes' chat, Vincent said :—

"Have you seen the paper?—there it is."

And drawing it out, he gave it to him.

Newton took it, and opened it ab-

stractedly, looking leisurely down the sheet. Presently his attention became arrested—he grew pale.

“Good Heaven ! what’s this ? ” he exclaimed. “Can it be true ? Listen ?”—and he read as follows :—

“Determined suicide.—Yesterday morning, about half-past eleven, a young gentleman, of fashionable appearance, was observed hurrying across Waterloo-bridge, apparently in a state bordering on distraction ; having reached the middle of the bridge, he suddenly, and before any one could stop him, jumped on the coping of the bridge, and sprung over into the river, and in falling, his head came in contact with one of the piers of the bridge. The act was observed from the shore, and boats were instantly put off to rescue him, if possible, from a watery grave. All their efforts, however, were of no avail, as the unfortunate young man sunk instantly,

owing, it is supposed, to his having been stunned. It was some hours ere the body was recovered, when these suppositions turned out evidently to be correct, as a severe gash on the temple testified. The body has been identified as that of a Mr. Chilliwn, late an *employé* in Her Majesty's Redundancy Office. The cause of this melancholy affair is supposed to have been an unrequited attachment to some beautiful foreigner. The friends of the deceased, who was a most amiable young man, are in the deepest grief in consequence of the rash act."

Vincent heard all this passively, merely remarking, "Ah!—yes—hum—. They will do it. Never could see the sense of it, though."

"I always told him *that* Greek was a villainous coquette, and was playing the deuce with him," said Newton, reflectively.

“ Ah—ay—what! Greek! eh? What Greek? ”

“ Well, really, I can't remember her name. It was Alexandrona something. Alexan—” and he considered.

“ Alexandrona! Indeed! Could it have been Petrovich? ”

“ That's the name, sir—the very name. A wretched coquette. She used to lead him on and on ; poor Chilliwn was not very strong-minded. Poor fellow! she used actually to come after him to the office, and of course he fancied she was very fond of him, but I don't think she was. She always seemed a schemer. Dear! dear! dear! ”

“ The villains! ” said Sartoris, with sudden animation. “ The villains! Was he in difficulties at all at the office? Do you know? ”

“ No—oh no! His chief was remarkably affable to him. He had been promoted a

step too; so that there could be no difficulty there. No; it was completely the Greek."

"Likely enough. And you are sure there wasn't any difficulty at any time? Try and remember; what did Mr. Jamieson leave the office for two months since? I heard he was directly appointed to a consulship abroad, where I know the emoluments and *opportunities* are considerable."

"Oh! now you recall that, it was owing to a quarrel with Chilliwun himself. Chilliwun told me something about it. He said he had had a deuce of a row with Jamieson about some papers. Jamieson was over with him, you know; and Jamieson used such language, as Chilliwun said—though he didn't tell me what it was—he thought he should have had to call in my services. But before this it came to the chief's ears, and they

had a long interview with him. He didn't say what transpired; but a few days after, Jamieson resigned, and instantly got this appointment."

"Just so. Ah! I thought so. All alike; all alike!" and Vincent fell into a deep reverie, in which he did not appear to desire to be interrupted; and, after bestowing a few thoughts of regret upon his friend, and heaping execration on the head of the fair Greek, Newton took up his rod once more, and slowly walked along the river. This time, however, he was deep in thought, and the fish escaped scathless.

After a time Vincent joined him; and they strolled along the bank, chatting more pleasantly.

"How pure and clear this water is," said Newton.

"Not so pure or clear as it might be," answered Sartoris.

“Do you think not? I hardly see how it could well be much clearer.”

“This water is dull, compared with many a sparkling brook I have seen. How many towns and villages has it passed through, each of which has contributed its full share of muck and filth to it towards its defilement; and every village it passes through drinks the diluted filth of the village above it. Look at those villainous paper-mills, too, on that branch stream, which destroy every fish from thence to the sea, pouring forth their volumes of smoke and stench, and tainting the air that hangs over the wretched houses, and is breathed by the more wretched inhabitants which surround them. Now this is your boasted civilisation. What do you do? You deface the earth, you defile the waters, and you poison the air; and your boasted science, which is what you really mean by civilisation,

doesn't provide you with a remedy. Nearly all the evils that men suffer are of their own planting and their own production. Look you now: there you have grinding labour, and there you have consumption and lung diseases; while here you have cholera, with stomach diseases of all kinds, and fevers likewise, all of home production, and all literally unnecessary to a degree. Why, the ignorant savage, whom you revile and make shows of, doesn't do so, and why should you? Even if you like to poison yourselves, it is rather hard upon the little fishes that you should poison them too."

"Oh, but you are quite wrong, our science does provide us with a remedy, and there is no necessity for their being poisoned any more than us; because I know plenty of rivers, with paper-mills on them, where the fish abound, and in some cases are really a fine-made, handsome

fish. It is because they throw the refuse bleach and other poisonous stuff into the river, instead of into a spare tank, (and it makes famous manure too) that the fish are poisoned."

"Then what, in Heaven's name, do they throw the stuff in the water for?"

"Oh, the man there is no angler, and and doesn't care about fishing; besides, not being a very good-tempered fellow—and—and—"

"But it's to his interest, if it makes good manure. It would even pay him well. Why, what a miserable hog the fellow must be! Isn't there any law to compel him to keep his poisonous refuse out of the water?"

"I really don't know. It would be a very good thing if there were such a law, as one-half and more of the best trout-streams in the country are thus destroyed

—at least, so Sir John says—to say nothing of health.”

“They tell me that immense numbers of fish are destroyed every year by the foul water in the Thames. I suppose it’s true enough.”

“Yes, so my father says. He complains very much of the fishing there. He says that there is no such thing as barbel-fishing now, even to compare with what it was a few years ago. It seems that the fish drop, after spawning, I believe, down into the tide-way, and when the tide turns and flows up, it brings up all the London sewage, and from Mortlake downwards, hundreds of bushels are turned up in a tide. But here we are at home. Dinner will be ready in half-an-hour,” —and they separated,

CHAPTER VI.

"A WAS AN ARCHER, AND SHOT AT A FROG."

"I SUPPOSE you are all bent on clapping 'a shaft i'the clout at four score, or four score and a half, to-day,'" said Vincent to the Dogvane family, assembled at breakfast on the next morning.

"I am going to a feast of love," said Mrs. Dogvane, impressively.

"A what?" asked Mr. Dogvane, as if he could hardly trust his ears. "A what?" he repeated.

"A feast of love—and what then, Mr. Dogvane?" This was said sharply.

"Oh! nothing, my dear—only I hope you'll get a belly full of it."

"I pity you, Mr. Dogvane—I pity you."

"Thankee, my dear, I'm sure it's kind of you to bestow anything so valuable on me; and if you could bring home a little of that other article you're going to have such a blow out of, for general use, you know—I wouldn't stint my appetite, if I was you. I shall go a archering. A was an archer, and shot a frog, my dear; now I shall be A—A 1, in fact, for to-day, and I'll shoot at any number of frogs that come in my way."

Mrs. Dogvane made a curious sound, something like a hem—we can't write it, but it is intended generally to express incipient wrath and vexation, in consequence of not having any retort in words ready; and then, saying he "got worse as he grew older," she marched from the room.

“She’s a good creature,” said Mr. Dogvane, “only since the departure of that fellow, Courtenay, the low church snobs are uproarious, and take all the credit of it, so that there’s no holding them, whilst the dissenters are making no end of a pot of it between ’em; and my good old soul has got picked up by some of them, and they go snuffling and canting about, peddling, and meddling, and interfering everywhere, and they hold prayer-meetings, feasts of love, they call ’em, and all sorts of nonsense; and the dear old thing likes to go t’em, and fancies it does her good. To be sure, she’s rather hot on me about it at times; but then, you see, she doesn’t always get the best of it, and as long as I do as I like, I don’t care. I hope you won’t think any further excuse necessary,” he continued to Vincent.

“My dear sir, pray don’t say a word;

I understand it all. The best possible bond of union is for each to do as they like."

"Yes, I *suppose* we must go. And then there's the ball to-night; I'm one of the stewards," said Newton. "The Bowerses will all be there, and I suppose they'll be at the archery." He *supposed*, (when he'd been drilling Bessie in archery for a week.) "What do you propose doing with yourself?"

"Oh," answered Vincent, "I have no weakness for archery, but I want to ride over to Minstead on an errand—I want to glance at the parish records—I've rather a—that is, I've rather a curiosity to look at them, and I shall be back, I daresay, by dinner time. Did you see Mr. Bowers—I mean the younger one, Mr. Charles, last night?"

"Uncle Crabb, you mean—oh yes?"

"How was he?"

"How was he? Oh, very well—nothing ever ails him."

"You'll go to the ball to-night, I suppose," asked Newton.

"I *shall* go to the ball, sir. Marry, sir, but I am fond of a dance, and will trip it on the light fantastic toe with the best of you. I care not whether it be fling, jig, waltz, coranto, or double-shuffle hop. I am not indifferent at a clog hornpipe; at an Indian war-dance or a Hindoo nautch, I am equally at home. Here we go—down the middle—lum-ti tum-ti, lum-ti tum-ti, fol de riddle lol;" and Vincent double-shuffled to himself in the pier-glass, and then spread out his arms, and gave a terrific Indian howl, and stamped until Mr. Dogvane's hair stood on end.

"Why, you're in the most outrageous spirits this morning!" said Newton. "I never saw you so uproarious."

“Yes, you are quite right; something extraordinary is going to take place. Somebody will come to grief before the day’s out. I always feel like this on such occasions. Can’t account for it in any way. I’m a species of second-sight barometer—like the frogs, I suppose, lively before rain. Bet you twopence you don’t clear that rhododendron, and I do.”

They had walked to the glass door, which stood open. There was a tall, thick rhododendron on the lawn, about the height of a man’s head. Newton laughingly took the offer, and jumped into the very middle of it. As he was trying to extricate himself, Vincent called out:—

“Tuck in your twopenny, as the little boys say in the streets”—and Newton had hardly time to bob his head down, when, with a slight run, and a bound like a deer, Vincent Sartoris came flying over

Newton's head, and cleared bush and all handsomely.

“ By Jove! what a jump!”

“ They used to call me the Flying Squg; you know I'm a chief of a tribe. Ha! ha! ha! I remember jumping over an old Comanche Chief once. I shall never forget it. We went on the trail into the Comanche country; I got hemmed in by four of them. We had surprised their camp, and they hadn't time to mount their horses; still they made a fight for it, and four of them got me up in a corner. I sung out, as if there was help coming to me from behind them. It was only a *ruse*, and one of them, the old chief, bit; he looked round, to see that he was not taken at a disadvantage; and the moment he did so, I played leapfrog with him, and bolted. But if you could have seen his surprise and horror for the moment, at seeing my legs extended like a large

pair of tongs on each side of his head and shoulders—his disgust at so undignified a proceeding, for they have grand ideas of dignity—it was most comical. Ha! ha! ha! Upon my word, I am in very strange and unusual spirits to-day.” And they walked round to the stables.

We don’t intend to inflict an archery meeting on our readers, for little could be said of it beyond who hit and who missed; how one got a bull’s eye—by the way, “gold,” we believe, is the more proper term; we beg pardon of the venerable and noble order of Toxophilites, as they are styled.

“Why the deuce,” said Uncle Crabb, “can’t they call themselves archers or bowmen? What do they want to lug such a term as toxophilology into the language for? Everybody seems to be getting ashamed of his mother tongue, and in-

venting a new one. Fancy a description of Poitiers thus: 'Then the English toxophilites discharged forthwith showers of toxophilitic weapons on the enemy,' and so forth. Yah!" and Uncle Crabb walked away, improvising and singing to himself, with many and strong expressions of disapproval:—

“ ‘ Oh, bold Robin Hood was a toxophilite,
 A toxophilite was he;
 And Scarlet, Much, and Little John,
 Toxophilites all three.
 Then hey for the lively and verdant shade—’

Not the merry greenwood, oh no!—it's lively and verdant, and merriment is vulgar and out of the question—and as to green—pooh! common people eat greens, and call one another greens. So,

“ ‘ Hey for the lively and verdant shade,
 Hey for the trysting-tree.’

Ah ! they're as good at the trysting as ever they were ; if not better.

‘ “ And there we'll play the livelong day ! ’

“ At Toxophilology ; ” no doubt ! oh, yes, Toxophilites, to be sure. They're all Toxophilites. Here's a thing to call a bow ! ” and taking up one of the light ladies' bows, he gave such a furious pull at it, that he smashed it ; and then, smiling grimly as he cast the pieces from him, he went on, “ Rather a different thing that now, to the six foot of stout yew ; and this gim-crack splinter (breaking a gaily decorated arrow) from the cloth yard shafts, drawn to the head, sir, by our ancestors. Yah ! and this, I suppose, is your Toxophilite. And a d—d pretty specimen *he* is too. Well, I say, you, sir ! ” And he turned towards a sickly-looking youth, who, arrayed in a fancy dress of green serge

and buff boots, was thinking no pale ale of himself, as he struck attitudes with his bow and arrow, sufficient to have warranted any one in supposing that he meant to shoot everything alive, out of doors, in that one identical shot. "I say, you, sir!" said Uncle Crabb to him. "What d'ye call yourself?"

"Me, sir?" answered the youth, a little stiffly. "My name, sir—"

"Hang your name!" broke in Uncle Crabb. "Who asked for it? It's that Tom Fool's dress I was speaking about. What d'ye call it?"

"Really, sir, I must say—I beg that, —that is, I must remark, that you—you —" And he paused.

"Yes, sir, yes? That I? Go on, sir, go on—I what?" and Uncle Crabb looked excessively waspish and belligerent.

"You are certainly a little—that is—

just a—little hasty, sir. You ask me the name of this uniform, and I should be pleased to accord to you—to accord to you,” (and he repeated the word, because “accord” was a good word—just the least thought stilty ; and having been handed down rather [sharply out of his stilts, he felt the necessity of getting back to them speedily) “to accord to you that information, if asked in a way in which I should feel justified—a—justified” (another good word) “in according that information. This dress, sir, is the uniform of the Toxophilite Club, sir; and I have the honour, sir—I have the honour—a—to be—a—a—Toxophilite. Ehem!”

Nothing in the least disturbed in his intentions by this show of stiffness, Uncle Crabb took the collar of the objectionable garment between his finger and thumb, and, holding it aside at arm’s length,

looked the young gentleman up and down, and then said:—

“And ain’t you ashamed of yourself, to go calling yourself names, and making a noodle of yourself in this way? Why, you’re nothing in the world now but a tailor’s advertisement—a fancy-dress tailor’s advertisement. You don’t suppose that Robin Hood was ever such an ass as to wear anything of that sort, do you?”

“Really, sir—I—you—I must beg—your conversation is—” and freeing himself, he turned away—“what I’m not accustomed to; I must say—that.—Good morning, sir! Good morning!”

“I’ve made him comfortable for the day,” said Uncle Crabb, as he walked away with a grim smile. However, in spite of Uncle Crabb, the Toxophilites enjoyed themselves in their own peculiar fashion. Bessie Bowers won a silver

arrow, and somebody else won a gold one, and they were all very happy. The luncheon was capital. The champagne was the best that could be made out of gooseberries, and they drank it, and engaged partners for the ball; and Mrs. Spelthorne, who was flirting with Sir John Vasey for the moment, to Ned's intense annoyance, was very amusing, and vastly good-natured—in fact, she proved quite an acquisition. The sisters were introduced to her; but somehow, as the phrase is, “they did not hit it off,”—there was an instinctive repulsion and dislike between them. They were not jealous of her, though she might have been of them possibly.

“I thay Ned,” said Sissy, “I than’t have that woman for a thither-in-law.”

“Why not, Mischief?” asked Ned.

“I don’t know what maketh me think

of it in connecthon with her, but the remindth me of a wat-twap."

"A rat-trap. What do you mean?"

"Why, the lookth all over like biting to me; but the lookth all over like toothed cheeth to you. The won't do for Crookham. I than't have her."

"You'd better tell her so," said Ned, good-humouredly, for she had just promised the first waltz to him, and he was in great spirits.

"I than't be very particular about that, I can tell 'oo, if I think there'th half a chanth of her coming here to interfere with my pwewogative."

The Assembly-rooms at Maidstone were thrown open; lights flashed to and fro; carriages rumbled, and footmen shouted. It really promised to be a very grand ball. The county people, as they are styled, came tumbling in rapidly. Mr. Newton Dogvane, with five other gen-

tlemen, arrayed in faultless black, and further decorated with white bows, acted as stewards. Newton was standing on the landing, interchanging a word or two with Vincent Sartoris, when, as they looked over the bannisters, they saw a lady and gentleman coming up.

"Who's this?" asked Vincent.

"Don't know, I'm sure." He caught a glimpse of the gentleman—it was Ned; at the same moment the lady looked up—it was Mrs. Spelthorne.

"Oh! it's Ned and Mrs. Spelthorne," answered Newton. Newton did not observe the change in his companion's face and manner, at the sight of her upturned face. Vincent Sartoris turned suddenly pale, and clutched the rail with the force of a vice.

"I thought there was something in the wind this morning," he murmured. Then, turning to Newton, who had begun to

notice his agitation, he asked, "What did you say that lady called herself?"

"Mrs. Spelthorne," answered Newton.

"Ha!" and Vincent gave a short bitter laugh, "it's as good a name as another. Spelthorne, *alias* Coralie Leschantelles, *alias* Madame Vanvoorten, *alias* Mrs. Hagley. The murderess of my poor Charley—a notorious *intriguante*—the greatest strumpet in Europe. I have unmasked her once or twice, and will again. I felt this morning, by the spirits I was in, that she was near me. Something told me she'd be at this ball, although 'tis two years since I saw her. D—n her, I'll drive her to h—l, but what she shall feel the weight of my revenge. I know her—I know all her clique—Petrovich, too. You spoke of her the other day—that woman fiend, whose fatal beauty made me, amongst others, an outcast. I might

have known it all then. Worthy pair! admirable villainy!"

"Good heavens! what do you say?" asked Newton, breathless with surprise and dismay.

"Say! that that woman is known for what I tell you, in Paris, in St. Petersburg, in Brussels, Rome—everywhere. How came you acquainted with her, and yet scatheless?"

"Carysford introduced me to her."

"Carysford, too! Better and better! A dirty, swindling, petty *employé*, living on the wages of infamy! He's been her cully, her companion, her tool, some two years or more, and as for poor Ned, the lad has some pluck, and some little brains, and they'd make use of him somehow, until they made him as bad as themselves. My course, at any rate, is plain, and no time is to be lost. She is now leaving the dressing-room. She cannot be received

here. By heaven! that such a woman should have been introduced to those innocent girls is contamination enough; she shall not meet them again;" and walking to the men who stood at the door to receive the tickets, a few energetic words were spoken, a list of names referred to, and he passed in with Vincent, standing within a few feet inside, as if to prevent the possibility of her entrance. A waltz struck up; Newton glanced into the room, and saw Bessie hanging on Uncle Crabb's arm; she nodded and smiled, and Newton felt a pang shoot through him. "What might not arise from the act about to take place?" He feared it, but was nevertheless resolved.

"We shall be late, Neddy," said the lady.

"Never mind, dear," answered Ned; "we must make up for lost time, you know."

“Have you the tickets?”

“Here they are—two;” and they were about to pass in, when one of the undertaker-like-looking functionaries at the door, interposing his person, glanced at the tickets, to be sure he was quite right, and said:—

“Very sorry, sir, to have to say that this lady’s voucher is refused.”

“Refused!” said Ned, firing up. “Refused! What do you mean, fellow?”

“The lady cannot go in, sir,” said the man, firmly. “The stewards refuse her voucher.”

“Come; come away,” said Mrs. Spelthorne, for so we must continue to call her—“Come away. It is some sorry jest; I will not stay to be made a jest of,” and she laughed feebly. How abject she was!

“Come away!” said Ned, raising his voice in passion, and attracting the notice

of two or three who stood near. "Come away! What scoundrelism is this? Who dares treat a lady thus?"

Newton saw it was time to interfere—and, though trembling for the result, as affecting the position he stood in towards the family and Bessie, he came forward.

"My dear Ned, this is a wretched affair. I feel deeply for you. I am grieved beyond measure. But that lady has given a false name. Her name is Hagley, and—and—"

"Then you are the author of this," said Ned, furiously; "you—you! It is false, sir—it's a lie, a scandalous invention. You—you villain!" He was breathless with passion.

Newton flushed to the temples. He raised his hand, and made one step forwards. Remembering himself, however, he stopped, his hand fell helplessly at his side, and he said in a low, choked voice:—

“I—I—I must bear it.”

“What!” cried Ned, rage and scorn struggling united; “coward as well as liar? Then—” and with his arm drawn back, he was about to rush on him, while Newton, now enraged beyond all control, was springing forward with flashing eye and clenched fist to meet him.

At this moment Newton found himself suddenly checked by a grasp of iron from behind, for Vincent held him back; while Mr. Bowers, who had come forward on hearing the noise, and had interchanged a few words with Vincent, stepped between them, and placing his hand on his son’s breast, said sternly:—

“I have heard all, sir. This gentleman but fulfils the duties of his office. Go home, sir. I pity your unfortunate position, and deeply regret all that has occurred; but—but you had better withdraw.”

Ned looked round. Mrs. Hagley had

slipped away at the first symptoms of the fracas; and Ned, without another word, dashed down the stairs and disappeared.

Fortunately, Bessie and Uncle Crabb had walked to the other end of the room, and the crowd and the music prevented their hearing what had occurred.

There were some heavily curtained windows around the ball-room; to one of these there was a small balcony. It was bright moonlight. In the farthest shade of the balcony sat Newton, his forehead resting on the cold iron rail. Bitter tears forced their way from him, as he tried to soothe, to excuse, to calm his outraged feelings.

“Had it been anyone but him—anyone but her brother, I would have trampled on him, I would have—have killed him,” he said to himself, for the hundredth time. “I would—I—”

A soft hand was laid upon his arm. He looked hastily around. It was Bessie.

Now, doubtless, the reader expects a love scene, all in the usual conventional style of writing; but love scenes, if written, as they really and truly, and in fact usually, occur, would be mighty uninteresting things, as they are, in truth, to anyone but the parties concerned. We only speak out of the fulness of our own experience, and we have no right to assume out of the fulness of anybody else's. No doubt there have been cases where the lady and gentleman talked very high-flown language, and used fine phrases and rounded periods—made love, as it were, in the heavy Johnsonian style, Let those parties then monopolize that style of description, and etherealize their sentimentality to the utmost. We can only say, as we have said before, that our love-making has not been done in that way,

and we would not describe, save from experience; and as we don't know how to put a look or two, a stammer or two, a jumble of words—intended to express rapture, knocking against each other in their eagerness to get out first—along with gentle caresses and tender endearments of that sort on paper, we prefer to leave it untold. Let each reader, then, who feels any interest in this story, refer her or his memory back to the dearest, most delightful, and best-remembered passage of her or his life, and that will suffice for the case in point. We feel this is a disappointment; we can't help it. We apologise for it, for we know not how to write unnaturally—if we did, we wouldn't—and this we say in all humility, feeling our weakness.

Two hours later, a glass door of a small and elegant cottage *ornée* was dashed violently open, and out upon a smooth lawn, tastefully ornamented with

shrubs, now silvered over with the moonlight, sprung the figure of a man; terrible excitement and bitter grief struggled in him for mastery; he turned one moment, raised his clenched hand, as if about to hurl an imprecation at the house; but his arm sunk down, and he buried his face in his hands. Another figure stepped slowly through the door, and flung it sharply to behind him. At the sound, the first thrust his hair back from his face, and looked up.

“You are satisfied?” said the last comer.

“I am, and wretched—wretched for ever!”

“Nonsense; draw yourself together, man, Where is your pride? In a few months you will smile at yourself. And now—where to? Home?”

“Never, never! I can’t—I won’t!”

“Is this your fixed, unalterable determination?”

"It is."

"Where then?"

"Anywhere. The world is all alike to me now, so that it isn't home."

"You are firm, then?—Resolved in this?"

"I am. Why waste words?"

"Come with me then.—He may as well go with me as with anyone else. I'll watch over him and guard him as a brother, for the sake of those he leaves behind. Yes, it is better so—better so—I can do much for him which others could not," said Vincent Sartoris, communing within himself, as he and Ned walked away in the moonlight, and were speedily lost under the deep shadow of the trees."

Within the room they had just left sat Mrs. Hagley, her head leaning on her hands, her long, fair, golden hair streaming down upon the table and hiding the white

arms beneath it, her ball dress unchanged' but crushed and in disarray. By the fireplace, with his elbow on the mantelpiece and his foot balanced doubtfully upon the fender, his whole attitude and look bespeaking perplexity and vexation, stood Carysford. Now and then he cast a timid, anxious look at the lady.

"Don't take on so, Poll," he said, at length.

"If you Poll me, you—you—you worm, I'll stab you;" and she seized a pointless silver fruit-knife, which lay near, but seeing what it was, she threw it from her in petulance and disgust.

"Nonsense," said the man, "be calm. Do—hang it—do be a little calm. Why can't you listen to reason?"

"Reason!" jerked out the lady, savagely, "reason! I've listened to your reason long enough, and too long. Had it not been for your miserable scheme

upon this stupid Baronet, I had won the only man I ever loved, and been happy with him. Ay, happy—if I could be happy. I'd have made him a faithful and a good wife, I would. I feel I could."

"Nonsense. Don't talk nonsense."

"Nonsense? Yes, of course it is nonsense to you."

"And so it is to you; because it would have amounted to bigamy. Hagley is not dead yet."

"Ever my bane—ever my curse! Why do you always throw that—that brute into my teeth, nor leave me a moment's happiness, even in imagination? Can it be true that woman, once degraded, is lost for ever? Can it be that there is no turning—no—no repentance—no chance of a better life for us?"—and she flung herself upon a settee, and once more buried her face in her hands.

"I don't know about that," said the

man, looking aside and down at her, with a half-smile, such as a triumphant ogre might be supposed to wear—"I don't know about that; only I don't think it lies just in that direction. What is that about sackcloth and ashes, I've read or heard somewhere? You'd look well in sackcloth, Poll, a sister of the order of St. Cyprian; and as for ashes, just pitch a shovelful or two on the floor, and take off your shoes, and treat us to a *pas-de-repentance*. Now look here, we've failed here—made a regular mull of it. It's all your own fault; you would go down to that confounded ball. If you hadn't gone, you'd never have seen that infernal Sartoris, and he might never have recognised you, and you might have married the Baronet in the long run, if you'd played your cards well, and used him and his fortune to our mutual advantage. As it is, it's no use regretting it. We,

that is you, are blown, and the game's up. That confounded handicap has swallowed the little ready I had, and now this has blown up, too. It's too hot for me in England. I only escaped Solomons, as I was coming down here this evening, by a miracle, and the chase is getting rather too exciting. I don't dare show myself, except at night. Sunday's my only day out, and I'm like a servant-of-all-work, besieged by missuses;" and he laughed at his own wit. "Egad," he continued, "the word is 'slope,' and I hardly know where to slope to. It's warm for me everywhere, as far as that goes. But go somewhere I must; I must try over the Channel again, I suppose. How you could be such a fool as to spoil one of the best plants ever laid, by falling in love with that—that—" and he paused for an expletive strong enough to express his hatred of Ned.

“Stop ! ” almost shrieked the lady.
“Stop! One word against him, and—
and—”

“Nonsense. We must go. Do you hear? We must go.”

“I shall stay,” said the lady, decisively.

“No, you won’t.”

“I shall.”

“I tell you, you won’t. If you expect to see him again, you’re deceived.”

“He spurned me. He cursed me—and—and I—”

“Of course he did; what else could you expect? Why did you attempt to play such a fool’s game? It served you right.”

“Nevertheless, I will stay. I’ll break off this villainous—this infernal connexion. I’ll play the spy, the wretch, no longer for any one—for any one;” and she stamped her foot. “It is ended; and

now go; I will never see you again. Begone, sir, your presence is hateful to me."

She pointed to the door.

"Sorry I can't oblige you—you must come with me."

"I have said I shall stay."

"You will not."

"What is to prevent me? Will you?"
and she drew herself up. She was a magnificent figure; and with her hair flowing in wild folds and braids down over her shoulders like golden cords, her flushed cheek, her brilliant, angry eye—she was a splendid picture.

Carysford looked at her for a moment in undisguised admiration, and then said, slowly:—

"Oh! I know *I* shan't prevent you. But this may;" and drawing a small, closely-folded note from his waistcoat-pocket, he handed it to her. At first she

drew back, instinctively as it were; then took the note, with a slight shudder, and murmuring, "From Petrovich," opened it slowly, and began to read. Pausing, she turned up the lamp to obtain more light, and threw one eagle glance at him as he stood in an attitude of affected unconcern, with his back to the mantel-piece, and the foot—no longer doubtful—carelessly hanging by the heel upon the fender. She sat down on the sofa, and read; from time to time she stopped, as if to consider. Carysford whistled a tune softly, and she made a gesture of impatience, and frowned heavily at him; he left off, and she went on again. It came to an end at length; she sat looking fixedly at him for some time with a puzzled, wondering look, and said:—

"You know what this is?"

"No, he answered, "but I've a very shrewd suspicion. I thought you were

overplaying your game with Petrovich ; and although I don't quite understand the ins and outs of either her or your game, I know that what she says, you're obliged to do."

"It is too true," she said, with a heavy sigh.

Another pause ensued.

"We must go ; there is no help for it." Then, in an accent as of a soul in agony, and in which despair, terror, and anguish mingled, she burst forth, "Oh, sin ! sin ! sin ! what chains you bind your servants in. The first fall enslaves us, and the longer we follow you, the heavier and more certain becomes our bondage,—no escape—none—none," and her head drooped towards her bosom as she spoke.

Soon she looked up, waved her hand.

"No more of that ; we must go.

Find a waggon within an hour. We must strip the house, and away before morning. It is but one more escapade—one more little drop in the ocean of wrong; so begone regret; if I dwelt on it, I should become a suicide. Ha! ha! we must victimise the landlord and upholsterer again. Why, where are your spirits, Carysford? You're as dull as ditch-water. Kiss me, Bob, and then be off and find a waggon, and come and lend a helping hand here."

The required caress was given and returned, with a shiver on her part, strongly repressed though; and as if to keep it down, she kissed him again, and all trace of it vanished on the instant. No human being can live without sympathy, or he becomes a brute. This woman was a powerful instance of it. The good she longed for was severed, and so she courted even the sympathy

of her vile companion, repulsive as it was to her, rather than live without it.

There was a wonderful amount of "*endurcissement*" in that caress, a wonderful tempering for evil of the malleable metal, Hitherto she had sometimes looked back. Henceforth she only looked forward to a delusive future, ever changing and dissolving, and "paved with intentions" which shifted, glimmered out faintly and more faintly, as day by day, and year by year, drew her onwards towards the black gulf. Verily the soil crumbled more and more beneath her feet, the nearer she drew towards THE CONSUMMATION.

In the morning the house was stripped and empty, and those who had occupied it were far away.

CHAPTER VII.

KARS.

ANOTHER day of starvation and wretchedness had passed; and another night of watchfulness and weariness had closed around the devoted city of Kars. Stout soldiers, inured to every toil and hardship—the worthy fellow-countrymen of those braves who had hurled back the tide of Russian invasion from the Principalities—were now, alas! being slowly reduced by sickness and short rations, and stood listlessly leaning on their

pieces, gazing wistfully out into the darkness ; cholera was busy amongst them, and occasionally a sentinel would be carried from his post to the hospital to die. Meat was getting very scarce, and what little there was, was taken up for the hospitals. And even the grain supplies grew so short, as to make their rations often little better than a mere crust of bread, or a handful of corn, altogether unequal to support such constant hardship and sleeplessness. Four men sat under the shadow of an embankment, in a small redoubt, on one of the most exposed portions of the Tshamash, itself the most exposed position of the entire line of fortifications around Kars. Three of them were wrapped in long cloaks, and were smoking. The three were evidently Europeans, and were conversing in English, which one of them spoke with somewhat of a foreign accent.

A little apart from them, and sitting on the ground, with his back against the earthwork, sat a Turk, gravely puffing at his tchibouk, as if there were no such things as Russians, and no such implements as thirty-six-pounders or rifles in existence. Yet, under his apparent repose, there was a constant watchfulness, and his eye turned slowly but repeatedly from point to point, as far as the range of his vision could take in. He was not dressed in the same costume as the rest of the Turkish soldiers, but was habited as a mountaineer.

“Mehemet seems more than usually silent to-night,” at length said one of the three whom we have noticed.

“He may be silent,” said another, “but his faculties are by no means unemployed. Mehemet,” he continued, raising his voice, and speaking in another tongue, “who was that fellow that brought in

the letters to-day? He must have come very close to it, if he did not run the gauntlet of the Russian camp. How he escaped the Cossack videttes I can't conceive, coming in that direction too."

Taking his pipe from his mouth, the Turk replied :—

"He is a spy—a Yezidi.* Lahnet be Shaitan.† He is the father of dogs, and the son of abomination."

"He must not be allowed to leave Kars; why did you not tell me that you knew him before? I thought, from the glance I had at the scoundrel's face, that there was something suspicious in it."

"He must not leave Kars. Oh Pacha! Inshallah, he will not—Aali has orders;" and the Turk returned the pipe to his mouth.

* The Yezidis are of the tribe of the Devil-worshippers, and held in abhorrence by the Mussulmans.

† Cursed be Satan.

“That’s well,” said the first; “Aali will not lose sight of him, I suppose.”

“Bakalum” (we shall see), answered the Turk, briefly, and again setting down to serious smoking.

The person who had first spoken here said:—

“Ask him if he thinks Mouravieff has overhauled the letters.”

“It is of no use, you’ll get nothing out him but Bakalum; and when a Turk gives his mind to Bakalum—we shall see.”

“What we shall see, I suppose.”

“Exactly. Hist! What is that? Didn’t you fancy that shadow yonder moved?” said the speaker, in a whisper. “Mehe-met!” he continued, in a low tone, and pointing in the direction in which his eyes were fixed. But Mehemet’s eagle-glance was already upon it. Pipes were hastily thrust aside, and each of the

Europeans drew and cocked his revolver.

The hand of Mehemet glides furtively to the hilt of his kama ; but he says, quietly :—

“ Yavash ! Slowly, take time ! There are two,” holding up two of his fingers. No one speaks ; the gaze of each is bent upon the spot where the supposed shadow was last seen. It is no longer there. Scarcely, however, is the vacancy observed, when another shadow steals, as it were, into it, and that, in turn, is lost. Presently there is a scrambling noise at one of the embrasures some little distance from them. Then an exclamation, succeeded by the sound of a fierce struggle. They are upon the spot in an instant ; a powerful Turk is holding a man in Armenian costume down by the throat, whose back is bent down across a gun, while the dagger of his captor gleams before his eyes.

The nearest sentinel challenges and approaches at the noise.

“Bring him into this angle,” said the European we have before noticed, who was known to the Turks as Achmet Pacha. “Some rascally spy, I suppose.”

A lantern was speedily procured. The man was led into a corner of the redoubt, where the light would not be seen from without.

“Bak, bak—see, see!” said Mehemet, holding the lantern to the ghastly face of the prisoner, in whom was at once recognised the bearer of the letters that morning received. “Said I not so? Pezevenk—(wretch)—kiupek oglu—(son of a dog)—where are the despatches?”

The man was silent.

“Speak, ere I destroy thee!”

And he drew forth his long, broad dagger.

But the prisoner still made no reply; and holding his dagger by the blade be-

tween his teeth, Mehemet, assisted by his servant, Aali, proceeded to search him; and, at length, a tiny strip of parchment was discovered sewed into the sleeve of his garment, with the exact position, weight, and number of the guns in that portion of the fortification, with the available number of men used to garrison it, and other particulars jotted down carefully and regularly.

As Mehemet glanced down the list, his frown deepened, and his eye flashed fire. Suddenly, in a fit of uncontrollable rage, he snatched his dagger from between his teeth, and, before any of those present could interfere, or cry "Hold!" he drove it into the body of the wretch, who dropped backward against the work, and then rolled down sideways, dead, almost without a struggle or a cry.

"What have you done?" said he whom we have called Achmet Pacha.

“Sent him to his father, Shaitan. On my head be it!” said Mehemet, sternly. “Where stayed he?” he asked, turning to his follower.

“At the house of Osman, the dyer,” answered the man Aali.

“Take three men with thee, and arrest Osman, the dyer, without delay.”

“You have spoken. Bismillah! it shall be done!”

And Aali walked away.

“I will account to the General for this. Hast thou that strip of parchment, Oh Pacha?”

“It is here!” said the former speaker; “and it were as well we took it straight to the General himself. It may be of importance, should any movement be contemplated by Mouravieff.”

“Evallah — truly Inshallah! You say well — we will go.”

And they turned away.

"Have you supped, Lavitzky?" asked the last of the Europeans, who had hardly spoken a word throughout the business.

"No," answered Achmet; "but I have a measure of beans to boil with the cut most tender from a horse's leg. One of the surgeons bargained it to me, as you say, for the good money, for it was a little—what say you?—a—"

"Oh! a little high, I suppose. But never mind that — it's a positive delicacy!"

"And then, likewise, I have of the black bread a half-loaf, and, too, a boat bottle of holy water, which I robbed from a Cossack, whom I—" and he made an imaginary thrust.

"On my word, your larder is sumptuous; and as I am going to die to-night, and I should hate to go out of the world on an empty stomach, why, I'll sup with you."

“Ha, ha! My brave! you shall be welcome, were you in the jaws of death himself. Will Bowers Effendim do me honour likewise?”

Bowers Effendim—who was neither more nor less than our friend Ned, considerably metamorphosed by some eighteen months’ rough service, and a crisp beard and moustache, which had accrued to him during that period—“would only be too happy to feed anywhere, as his own larder was invariably empty, his appetite, under the circumstances, being really so very good.” So, with another nod, they parted.

“What makes you so dull to-night, Vincent? Really, when you spoke of dying just now, I declare to you that the word struck upon my breast like a knell, or a knock on a coffin,” said Ned.

“Such a knell has been knocking at my own breast all day—I cannot shake it off—I have laughed, or tried to, at

myself twenty times—it is useless. I know that I shall not live the night out. I'm a strange fellow, and on my mother's side—an old Spanish family—there have been many instances of this species of second sight; I could tell you some things which would shake your very strongest convictions against the supernatural. But there is no time for that now—mark my word, I shall take a life and lose one. Death and I have often been face to face before, and I never feared him, or felt a tremor hardly in his presence, till now. I am sorry, indeed it is my chief grief, that I have brought you into such a pass as this; but I thought to have done well for you."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow, don't think of that; I don't mind it. Of course, it would be a little more pleasant if there were a little more grub attached to the duties; but as for the fighting, pooh! I

think no more of taking a pop at a high-flavoured Moscov than I used to at a woodcock at dear old Crookham. Heigho! wasn't that a first-rate pot I made at that Cossack? I told you that I took him right between the shoulders. Bless you, the fellow flopped over like a Red housepigeon. You wouldn't believe me until we came on the body at the reconnaissance. Bosh about dying, or getting fellows into fixes. Wait till Omar lands at Trebisonde; won't we cut our way through the beggars then! and when we have driven them all into the sea, and the war's over, and we are back in jolly old England again, how we'll laugh over all our old difficulties and dangers, and fight our battles over again in the arm-chair by the fire side."

"Don't trust to that; Kars will never be relieved; we are betrayed; I felt sure of it all along, from the delay which had

already occurred. What else did they get Omar to Sebastopol for? He wasn't wanted there. If they could have prevented him from thrashing the Russ at Silistria, Kars might have been spared; but something must be sacrificed to Russian prestige; and we are the victims. No, no, no, Kars never will be relieved, or why have we been left all these months to battle with starvation and disease? Moreover, intelligence has come in—I know not whether it be correct or no—that Omar has landed, or *been* landed, for *he has no transport at his own command*, at Sukum Kaleh.”

“At Sukum Kaleh! Good heavens! why—why, it's clean lunacy—stark staring madness. But I thought that—that—the plan approved by all was—to be—a—.”

“To be submitted to the British Home Government, and by them negatived, as

I believe it will be found. Because I know the plan of relief proposed was favourably spoken of at Constantinople, and all the authorities on the subject were agreed unanimously that nothing could be better, or so effective; but you know *the Turks were bound not to act aggressively against the foe, without the consent of the allies, and were obliged first to concert all measures with them*—remember that. Now, conceive the plan favoured by the English and French authorities out here, and also by the Constantinople people, and then conceive Omar being sent to Sukum Kaleh—oh! I know we are betrayed!”

“Indeed, it looks ugly. But what interest—what—eh!—could it be? Hang me, if I understand it. The whole thing seems a muddle.”

“Interest! Why, what interest can there be, but a Russian interest? Review

carefully the events of the war, and those which preceded it, and then come to any other conclusion if you can? Ah! if you had been behind the scenes as I have, and seen the trickery, roguery, villainy, treachery, that is practised, you'd understand it well enough. I had a glimpse of it once; but I broke away, and have held my life only with my own right hand since. Once, in London, I was nearly poisoned, escaping only through the thievish propensities of a favourite monkey, who stole what was intended for me, and died in agony the same night. Once I fought my way out of a house I was decoyed into, in Paris, killing one fellow and maiming two others, who set upon me. And once in South America, when I fought against Rosas, I was stabbed, but not effectively, by two villains, one of whom I recognised, and who paid the penalty of his murderous attempt.

The other, I regret, got off. Since then I have cooked my own food, and taken heed of my footsteps. But now my time is come. I know and feel it! and a solemn dread creeps over me. There is much between me and my Maker; and a long account of evil and neglected opportunities for good unfolds itself before my eyes. My conscience is—ah! how unquiet. Would that all had never been so—would it had never been. You think this strange, I know; you are astounded. You never heard me speak so before. Remember, as I stand here, these are the last words of a dying man. I have one secret I must tell to you. There are others which I cannot, for there is a closet in every man's breast, which none may venture to peep into. I am not the man you have ever deemed me to be. I was wild enough once; how I became so, it would be of little use for you to

know. But I trust and believe, I never became base—not base; I never canted; I was no hypocrite. For years I did not pray, though I weakly wished to. I felt my weakness and my wrong, and I owned it to—myself. Now leave me. I am going to—to pray, for the first time these ten years—for ten years I have never bent my knee. I told you of poor Charley Sacheverel; but I did not tell you all. We—you and I—are cousins, Ned. *Your* uncle—Uncle Crabb—as you call him—is my father; he married a young lady in Spain, a Catholic. Her persecutions—indeed, the whole story would take too long to relate now. I can't do it; he may. I told you the story of Charley Sacheverel, but not all the story; that would not do then. Charley Sacheverel and I were brothers; he was my younger brother. I sought your acquaintance purposely. You

will remember my putting a question to you on your likeness ; and you *were* very like him. It was with the view of finding out whether the circumstances of your uncle's marriage were at all known to you. From your answer, I saw they were not."

"Good heavens ! No—I—knew he had been unhappy in his married life, and so became soured ; but I did not for a moment—that is—I could not conceive that I—I am confounded ! Why did you not announce yourself ? Why, oh why, deprive him—deprive us all of the—the—?"

"Why should I ? My own life had been no credit to any one. What had I to do in a respectable family ? Besides, I saw that time had cicatrised the wounds ; and if you will have some leniency to a pardonable vanity—I—I thought to do something out here, which

would take me to his arms with credit. But this infernal system crushes all ambition and emulation that have anything like honesty attached to them. Look you, I shall sup with you to-night, as if nothing had occurred. I shall be the same being you have seen me, to all appearance. One last piece of advice I give you; whatever befalls, trust to Lavitzky; he would be hung inevitably, if caught, and will, of course, save himself, and you, if possible; and when I fall—don't look surprised, I shall fall—we shall have some fighting ere long. I say, when it is all over with me, take this—this packet, which is here,” and he pointed to his bosom, “and carry it to him,” and he pointed through thousands of miles towards Crookham, “and say, that had I been spared, I would have loved and honoured him. And now, kiss me, cousin, and say farewell; and let me feel

that at the last of an ill-spent and wasted life, I shall not die without leaving one to smooth a turf over my head."

They embraced again and again, in silence; and when poor Ned flung himself from the room, his cheek was wet, not with his own tears alone. It was midnight ere they met again.

The moon had risen, and was high in the heavens, ere our friends left Lavitzky's quarters. The supper which Ned and Vincent had partaken of, and which was not quite of so meagre a character as Lavitzky had jokingly represented it to be, was over, and Vincent and Ned, followed after a short interval by Lavitzky, sallied forth into the moonlight to visit their posts. Every point and elevation of the fortifications, as well as the plain beyond, lay glittering before them; while, here and there, the valleys and hollows

formed a sombre relief to the scene. Conversing in an under tone, they passed from post to post, until they reached the extreme end of Rennison's Lines; here they paused for a few seconds.

"Were I the Russian General," said Lavitzky, pointing towards the Shirshani Tepessi—a rocky height, apparently difficult to scale, and safe from attack—"that is the point I should direct an attack upon. I should make a strong feint upon Tshamash Tabia, and direct a cloud of skirmishers upon yonder point. It is by no means inaccessible, as I have proved, and that once gained, Rennison's Lines are turned, and the whole plateau is commanded."

"Oh! but no one would think of attacking that; we are all safe on that point," answered Ned.

"In that very fancied security lies the danger," returned Lavitzky. "By the

way," he continued, as they turned round, and were proceeding towards Kmety's quarters, "have you heard, Vincent, whether the cholera is increasing?"

"Fifty down with it to-day; so I hear," replied Vincent.

The announcement was received in silence, and a damp fell on their spirits.

"Where's Teesdale?" asked Vincent, who was still brooding and thoughtful.

"Gone round the lines towards the town; he must be at Fort Tchim by this."

They passed a sentry, and giving the word, strolled on. They were now passing along the long breastwork called Rennison's Lines, and pausing simultaneously, they looked forth over the slope beyond. After gazing in that direction for some time, they stood leaning against a gun, and smoking and chatting, while the sentry paced slowly up and down within

a short distance of them, occasionally interchanging a word with his nearest comrade. It was now three o'clock, and the moon began to turn, though it was still bright, with a cloudless sky. They were about resuming their round, when Ned, who had been looking through the embrasure, said quietly :—

“One could almost fancy that those were fields, marked out with hedges, and all as in England.”

Then, in a louder and a startled tone, he added :—

“There it is again—I could swear that that farther field is gradually shifting.”

Vincent sprang to the embrasure, gazed fixedly forth for a moment, and then said, solemnly :—

“They are fields that will bring death and destruction amongst us ere long.”

At this moment, a word appeared to pass along the line of sentries, and the

nearest approached them, and made some communication to Lavitzky and Vincent.

"I thought so—I felt it—I knew it," said Vincent.

"What does he say?" asked Ned, whose Turkish was very indifferent.

"That the enemy are approaching. Run to the General's quarters, and say that Mouravieff is coming up in force. Stay, I'll go myself. You, Ned, hasten to the tents of the rifles, there to the right, and give the alarm; and bid them turn out noiselessly, and hasten to the spot. Lavitzky, you had better find the Major of Artillery, and look to the guns. Train them low, and cram them with grape, and let them have it hot and strong—" and he was gone.

Ned was already on his errand.

Ere many minutes had elapsed, the fine old veteran, Kmety, came hurrying to

the spot. Laying his ear to the ground, he announced that he could distinctly hear the movement of artillery and large bodies of infantry.

“Where is Major Aali Aga? Hasten to him, sir; tell him, the enemy approach, and his artillery must be seen to instantly. You, sir,” and he turned to Lavitzky, who had sent the Major’s orderly in search of him, “go to headquarters as speedily as possible, and order the reserves to come to our assistance. Let five companies of the rifles take the breastwork to the right; two companies of the Arabistans occupy yonder lunette to the right of Yuksek Tabia; the remaining six can occupy the breastwork to the left. Let the reserve guns be posted, two to the right, and the rest in Yuksek Tabia; and let the fifth battalion give their support to Hussein Pacha.”

And giving these orders with energy,

coolness, and foresight, he walked to and fro, directing everything, his eagle glance taking in, as by instinct, the dangers of his position, giving a word of encouragement here, an order there; his presence worked like magic upon his officers and men, and the work of preparation went on swiftly, noiselessly, and without a particle of confusion; men and officers seemed to know their duty to the letter, and did it surely and well.

“Where is Captain Teesdale? You, Major Sartoris, throw yourself into Yuksek Tabia, and hold it; I know I can depend on you for that.”

And without a word, Vincent, followed by Ned, hastened to the redoubt.

And now all was prepared and in readiness to receive the enemy, and a breathless silence ensued, which lasted for more than half-an-hour. Straining their eyes out far over the valley, they dis-

tinctly made out three huge columns of attack, slowly and stealthily approaching, one directed against the left of the Tshamash Redoubt, one upon its front, and one full against Rennison's Lines. This last was the point where most danger was to be apprehended, since, being only an open breastwork, it might be taken in the rear, and the defence of this, General Kmety superintended in person.

The hearts of the cousins beat quick, and their cheeks flushed and paled alternately with apprehension; but the stern, compressed lip, the flashing, eager glance, the firm grip with which each held his rifle, showed that there was no unworthy fear mingled with their feelings. Once they exchanged a grasp of the hand, and Sartoris, with a melancholy smile, shook his head slowly.

“Nonsense!” said Ned, pettishly,

"I've no patience with your second-sight predictions. You'll laugh at them to-morrow."

But the foe were approaching. It was indeed an anxious and a trying moment. On this night hung the fate of the town, of the province ; the fate of the entire Turkish army in Asia depended upon a mere handful of men, some three or four thousand, with thirty guns, of various calibre, dispersed along a line of fortifications, extensive enough to have required at least treble the force to defend them properly. Indeed, it was but the consummate generalship of Kmety, in the management of his small force, backed by the clear-sightedness and most daring bravery of the pachas, his officers, alone, that decided the fortunes of the day. Here were heads to design movements, and hearts, with heads also, to direct them and carry them out ; here were no

wretchedly incapable generals ; no officers, anxious to obtain leave of absence upon urgent private affairs ; and, alas ! there was no reckless waste in the commissariat department either—small chance of that, poor fellows !

Here the atrociously calumniated Turkish pachas, whose bravery and endurance however was recognised and rewarded, in spite of English calumny, by their Sultan—showed what they were made of, and proved, by their bearing in the battle, as they did by their stubborn and unyielding fortitude during the whole of the siege, that Turkey need trust to *no* one but herself to maintain inviolate her independence.

The names of Hussein Pacha, who had three horses shot under him, and who, amid a hail-storm of grape and rifle balls, rode to and fro, smoking his Tchibouk and giving his orders with the utmost

unconcern—of Hallil Bey, who, wounded severely by a rifle ball, rode off the field to have it extracted, and then, with his leg bandaged up, returned to the field and headed his company, still under fire—of Colonel Zaccharia Bey, Aali Aga, Hassan Aga, Szelim Aga, Mustapha Bey, Mehemet Effendi, and a score of others, need but to be mentioned to shew that Turkey is not yet shorn of the fierce Osmanli spirit, and the martial talent and vigour which once swept Asia and menaced Europe, and might yet, if she were left to herself, single-handed hurl back the crafty Muscovite to the icy den he is fast emerging from by the aid of France and England.

But nearer and nearer drew the foe.
They reach the foot of the slope.

“What is going on upon that hill?”
asked Ned.

“Wait a moment, and you’ll see, or I’m

much mistaken," answered Vincent, who had been giving his orders rapidly and silently. "They're posting a battery there. There, I thought so ; our General opens the ball."

A single flash and a roar sent the messenger of death in the direction of the battery. The fire is immediately taken up along the whole line ; the enemies' batteries reply with tolerable strength.

Huge columns of infantry commence their struggle up the long slope towards the fortifications, animating each other with loud and thundering cheers—roar upon roar. But the artillery plies the columns, as they approach with grape and round shot—a continuous and increasing patter of musketry rolls along the lines—huge gaps are made in the masses as they draw nearer—rifle balls thin the heads of their columns terribly, but still they close up and advance, steadily, determinedly, and in good order.

To the left, the attack is partially successful ; Tshamash is turned, the breastwork to the left of it, and the tents in its rear, are in the hands of the enemy. But the column directed against Rennison's breastwork fared differently. With singular daring and coolness, this column, exposed for nearly half-an-hour to a withering cross fire, had struggled up the slope over all kinds of obstructions, and, having at length arrived within a short distance of the work, began to open fire ; but the losses they had suffered had damped their ardour considerably, and, seeing that their fire was anything but strong and well maintained, Kmety threw a fresh detachment of riflemen upon the point opposed to them, and the effect of this increase soon told upon them. The column, which was by this time close upon the fosse, some three or four Russian soldiers having, indeed, ac-

tually penetrated beyond the work, wavered, turned, and slowly retreated, leaving nearly a thousand dead behind them; and had there been but a plentiful supply of grape and other ammunition, the column might have been utterly annihilated during its retreat.

Meantime our friends had not been idle. Against the Yerim Ai—a lunette, covering some rocky ground to the left of Yuksek Tabia—a fourth column of attack, composed of some seven or eight hundred men, was directed. Anxiously they watched its advance. It closes on the lunette with loud hurrahs; a feeble scattering volley is the reply.

“What! By heavens! the villain is flying,” said Sartoris, stamping his foot. “Flying, by G—d! and if the enemy push on with them, all is lost.”

At this juncture, an exclamation of “Yaver Bey,” was heard.

Ned and Vincent turned their heads, and Captain Teesdale, followed by one companion, galloped into the redoubt.

Teesdale took his station, giving a few hurried orders to the men near him, and everything was ready to receive the enemy. Fortunately they had not pushed on with the flying garrison of the lunette, or they might have entered with them ; in which case, all would have been over, as the loss of this fort would have been irretrievable. Most fortunately, they did not do so ; but paused, as if to examine their prize and take possession of the guns — their design evidently being to turn them against the redoubt, and storm it under cover of their fire. This was an undoubted mistake.

The favourable moment was lost ; the panic consequent on the hurried entry of the defenders (!) of the lunette was

suppressed, the dispositions were made, and order restored.

Some heavy firing was now heard in their rear, towards the town.

“Fort Lake and the Ingliz Tabias are hot at it,” said Vincent; “and we are getting all the worst of it. What can General Williams be about, that he doesn’t send up the reserve to support us? The whole position is endangered seriously, and Kars may be lost by his awful neglect. What can he be about? Ha! that was a close shave!”

A bullet had struck away a piece of Ned’s forage-cap.

“Keep down. There is no use in making a mark of yourself. See now! Give me your cap,” and taking it, he placed it on the muzzle of his rifle, and raised it above the ramparts, the level of which cut the sky-line. The instant it rose above the line, three or four

bullets sung over their heads, and the cap spun away and fell on the ground.

“ Good job no one’s head was in it,” said Vincent as he picked it up, and once more restored it to Ned. A few minutes after this, the news came in, that the whole line of English Tabias, with the exception of Fort Lake, on which no attack was made, were in the hands of the enemy—the commander, as at Yerim Ai, bolting at the first charge, and leaving his garrison to take care of itself, which it did by following his example.

“ What are they doing in the lunette?” asked Ned.

“ Reversing the guns, and preparing to storm us. We shall have some warm work presently. By Jove! how Hussein Pacha is giving it to them on our left! Things look desperate, though, fortunately, the

attack on Rennison's lines appears to have failed, or we might consider the battle lost. Ha! I thought so."

A round shot flew over the redoubt, ricochetting and glancing off the top of the parapet.

"Now, then, look out!"

Another and another — a volley of musketry—and, with loud cheers, the Moscovs rushed towards the redoubt; but when they approached within fifty or sixty paces, a crashing storm of conical balls tore through them, cutting them down like wheat-stalks. But on they came, unchecked. On the edge of the fosse, however, another terrific volley, from the defenders of the redoubt, made them stagger and turn. Five or six of the Russians only, managed to scale the parapet; but they were knocked down, and bayoneted instantly. One fellow defended himself obstinately for a minute, when Ned's servant—who had

been loading his master's rifle with considerable assiduity, and who was an Englishman, and a Sussex man to boot, and who, in peaceful hours, was a devoted votary to the game of cricket — stooped down and picked up a nine-pound shot, and, with a regular round-handed swing, bowled it along the top of the parapet. Straight as ever cricket-ball to middle stump flew the shot, cutting the unfortunate Russian clean off his legs.

“How's that, umpire?” said Dandy, as he was called.

And turning round to receive his master's rifle, he announced to him that all the ammunition was expended.

“The deuce! — what's to be done? I say, Vincent, how are you off for ammunition? I'm out.”

“So am I. I didn't bring much with me.”

“Nor I.”

"Here, Dandy, jump over into the ditch, and fetch one of their pouches."

"And I say, Dandy, if you can find a flask full of anything drinkable, don't be above bringing that, too, for this is dry work."

"Cert'n'y, Mas' Ed'ard."

He had known Ned from a boy, and Ned had brought him from England with him. His history was brief. He loved a lass who did not return his love, and, consequently, his mind was set upon leaving his native spot. He had made his way to Woolwich, resolved, as he said, "to go East," when, on the very morning Ned and Sartoris were about "to go East," too, they met him, and took him with them as servant, and a faithful, honest, and brave fellow he was.

"Cert'n'y, Mas' Ed'ard;" and he stepped over the parapet, although rifle-balls and round-shot were flying hot and thick from

the lunette, which was only some hundred and fifty or hundred and sixty yards from them. In a few minutes, he returned with a couple of pouches, almost full of cartridges, and a flask, both of which were immediately put to their respective uses.

The Russians did not hazard another attack on the Yuksek redoubt, but contented themselves with keeping up a brisk artillery fire from the lunette — posting themselves behind it, on the reverse side; and the fire was promptly and smartly answered from the redoubt.

The morning had broken slowly, and it was now about six o'clock, when a reinforcement of Rifles of the Guards marched into the redoubt, with General Kmety at their head. He was joyfully received. Instantly a column of attack was organised; and, led by the General himself, with loud cries and shouts of "Allah hu!" and "Long live

the Padisha!" they dashed upon the foe. In five minutes they were in the lunette, and Ned and Vincent found themselves hacking and hewing right and left in a regular *mêlée*. No quarter was asked or received. The sword-bayonets of the Rifles came into full play, and the Russians were bayoneted and cut down on all sides. The Turks fought like devils. At this moment Vincent sprang upon one of the guns, which half-a-dozen Russian artillerymen were endeavouring to slew round against the attacking party, and began cutting down the cannoneers. One of them made a sweep at him with the rammer of the gun; avoiding it, by a dexterous blow of his sabre he severed it, and with a side stroke, which fell full upon the man's cheek, almost cut his head in two. At this moment, Ned, who was hastening to his assistance, saw him stagger and drop his sabre, and as he fell from the gun,

Ned, who had sprung to the side of the gun, received him in his arms.

A rifle-bullet had struck him full in the forehead. It was all over. A faint smile and a light pressure of the hand were the only tokens he gave of recognition—a kind of tremor or shiver ran through his frame, and the spirit of Vincent Sartoris passed away for ever. Just then the Russians fled in all directions, and left the Turks once more masters of the lunette.

Some hours later, the dun-cloud of battle drifted slowly from the plain below, and the reek of human blood went up to heaven, appealing for judgment on the deeds of earth—for judgment upon kings and conquerors, who spill blood like water, and value the image of God as nought in the scale when set against their own ambition. Oh, heaven! that man should slay his fellows by thousands, and should

imbrue his hands in their life-blood, that the hungry greed and curst devouring madness of the few should be fed ! Oh, God ! that, for a mere chimera of earthly glory, men should do such deeds as these !

The wail of orphans and widows floats upwards—upwards—accusing. Who, of all these conquerors, shall stand against it ?

“I am the resurrection and the life.” With mournful steps and slow, the sad procession moves onwards. The body of a mortal man is borne to its last narrow resting-place.

Sadly, slowly they come on. The night wind moans through deserted houses and broken walls. The melancholy cypresses sigh heavily as it sweeps round them, bending their lofty tops as though in reverence. The slow, measured tramp of the soldiers, the muffled drum, breaking

out now and again between the pauses of the wind—now scarce heard in the gusts, then swelling more loudly as they die away—falls upon the ear, a mournful requiem. Onward still, without the lines, to a quiet, secluded spot, in a little valley surrounded by stumps of trees, which stand, like warning ghosts, ghastly and sere. The flashing glare of the watch-lantern falls for a second on their shattered and splintered remains, and then, one by one, they glide back into the gloom, as if impatient of the light—the tomb marks of a noble grove which centuries have reared and centuries will hardly see replaced—sad evidences of where the storm of battle has touched, or of the wants of besiegers or besieged.

They stand around the grave.

“Man, that is born of woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut

down like a flower; he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one stay."

Solemnly, impressively the words go home to the hearts of all present. The watch-lanterns shed a dim light upon the gloomy scene. Thin, drizzling rain, mixed with sleet, falls heavily.

Again the sonorous voice swells out, more and more solemn as the service draws to its close.

The body wrapped in its martial shroud, with the sabre and equipments of the deceased upon it, is lowered gradually into the grave; the clods of earth fall on it with a dull, hollow sound which finds its echo in every bosom.

"Henceforth, blessed are the dead. . . . for they rest from their labours." The vanities and troubles of life are for ever over with him who rests below. "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Three volleys are fired; but they seem muffled, too, by the wind and rain. The grave is levelled, the turf drawn over it, and a large stone, backed by a plain wooden cross, on which are carved his initials, alone remains to mark the grave of Vincent Sartoris.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN AFFRAY.

DESPATCHES from Kars arrived in England. The gallant defence of the Turks, under their heroic leader, the British Commissioner, was in everyone's mouth. "Noble Williams! Glorious Williams!—Magnificent Williams!—See what your Briton can do, sir, when untrammelled by Foreign Offices and routine." Other names were mentioned, *en passant*, to be sure; but the lustre of Williams's (!) achievement threw them completely in the shade. The world hardly heard or knew

anything about Kmety, save that there was a Hungarian officer of that name, who behaved as anyone serving with *our* officers, and emulous of *our* valour and bravery, and animated by *our* pluck and endurance, would behave, as a matter of course. There were also two or three English officers whose names were honourably mentioned. Colonel Lake and Captain Thompson, who were fêted and received their meed of praise; but as for Hussein Pacha, Mustapha Bey, or Aali Aga, they were only Turks of the *Sick* empire; and although they mainly contributed to gain the victory, they were not, of course, worthy of notice. But “three cheers and one cheer more for Williams,” who will by-and-by return, “wearing his *blushing* (?) honours thick upon him,” to the tune of “See the Conquering Hero comes?”—William Williams Williams, &c., of Kars. Hurrah! That any English general should be found to swallow

praises and solid rewards (not due to him) for a splendid achievement he himself had no right to claim any share in—since he neither commanded nor was present on the occasion, and who not only risked all during the battle, by neglecting to send up the reserve when applied to, but who actually neutralised the success obtained by the Turks by his culpable inactivity and negligence in not taking prompt advantage of it by following up the stroke by a vigorous attack on the disorganised and discomfited enemy—is strange enough; but that his despatches should be a mixture of injustice and folly (folly, because the truth, sooner or later, must come out) is still more surprising. But, when we consider the *fêting*, the complimenting, the speechifying on his arrival here, and how he continued to accept all this, and although daily spouting to enraptured listeners, still continued to hold his tongue,

and suppress the truth, and to be made a hero of at the expense of others, is certainly hardly to be believed; and we do not feel so much surprise at the want of honesty and conscience—for that is a common want—as amazed at the impudence. Indeed it would be only the strict truth to assert, that instead of being the hero and defender of Kars, he was the deliberate loser of it. It is some satisfaction to find that public opinion, always fickle and usually unjust, has opened its eyes to this, has shown the jackdaw of his borrowed plumes, and tempered that inordinate vanity and egotism which marks the man.

The hero of Kars, forsooth! What did he do at Kars but squabble unceasingly, not only with the pathas, but with all whom he could not get completely under his thumb? Now, what are the real facts of the case, as they may be gathered from the written-to-order works of

Sandwith and Lake, with the more reliable ones of Kmety, M. de Zaklitchin, and the Blue Book. In the first place, Williams had no business in Kars, which was a rat-trap. In the next place, he was the cause of its being under-provisioned and over-peopled when he was there. The Turks wanted to send away women, children, and all who were useless for defence; he would not permit it, but sent away the mounted Kurds, horses and all, and then complained that he had not horses for conveyance, nor sufficient men. The Turks wanted to dry horseflesh for food. No! He sent the horses adrift for the Russians to catch them. He misrepresented the state of Kars entirely, when he went there, making it appear that the hospitals were full, when sickness had in a great measure long since ceased, and only returned with starvation and overwork. He accused a pacha, who would not

truckle and crawl on his belly before him, of having drawn rations for a thousand men more than he had. And this was afterwards proved to be utterly false, a due inquiry being instituted. He opposed the plan of a relieving army of forty thousand men to be sent under Vivian. He nearly lost the place by not sending up the reserves on the night of the 29th of September, and he positively neutralised that victory, subsequently, by not taking any advantage of it. He repeatedly refused the earnest solicitations of the "*cowardly*" pachas to be lead against the Russians, and formally declared that he could not do what Kmety did do with a mere handful of men.* Previous to his Kars exploit, he had been employed in the East, and he took some thirty thousand pounds of the public money, to settle the boundary question between Turkey and Persia; the

* *Id est*, cut his way through the Russians.

very non-settlement of which—the point being purposely left open and unsettled—afforded our Government a mere “approach to an approximation” (as we have heard it designated) to the flimsiest of all flimsy excuses for a war with, or rather a piratical descent upon, Persia. Of such stuff do we manufacture our modern heroes. Let him have Kars, by all means, tacked to his name, and let it not only be quartered, but hung and drawn, also, on his shield.

How anxiously, day after day, letters were looked for from Kars by our friends at Crookham, we need not say. Mother, father, sisters, paled or sickened with apprehension as the post brought an occasional letter from their truant. How each drew a deep breath, and whispered words of thankfulness, when the letter told them he was still unwounded and well. Mr. Bowers looked graver, perhaps

a trifle aged, during the last few months; while Mrs. Bowers could not conceal an air of anxious restlessness, previously a stranger to her, but which now appeared constantly to haunt her. How papers or letters containing news from the East were scanned and pored over—what speculations were formed, and hopes and fears expressed, from time to time. Of course Newton was a more constant visitor than ever, and every scrap of news, every paper or letter, which could bring or whisper hope, was sought out for them by him.

Time went on, and each post brought intelligence more serious and threatening than the last.

One evening the family were sitting around the hearth. The tea had just been removed. Mr. Bowers, with his hands resting upon his knees, was looking fixedly into the fire. Mrs. Bowers had

taken up a piece of knitting, and was ostensibly engaged upon it, but was really engaged in the same occupation as her husband. Uncle Crabb was fidgeting up and down the room. The girls were silent, either reading or else looking pensively at the fire. Charlotte was turning over the paper, (twice read already)—when they heard a horse pass and go round to the stables. Bessie blushed, and looked towards the door.

“Newton,” said Sissy, rising and going to the door to meet him.

“I wonder if he brings any news,” said Uncle Crabb.

Mr. and Mrs. Bowers looked anxiously at one another, but said nothing. Newton was delayed for a minute, and Mrs. Bowers trembled with nervous excitement and apprehension. What a wonderful store of love there is in a mother’s heart for her first-born son!

“Cheer up, dearest ;” said Mr. Bowers. “Trust in God, Charlotte.”

“I do, my dear,” said Mrs. Bowers, rising and putting her arm round his neck, and kissing him. “But he’s our only son, John.”

“Never mind, dear ; I’ll be bound the lad does his duty. They’ve thrashed the Russians, that’s it. Omar has landed, and the siege is raised. See if I’m not a true prophet. It’s what I’ve expected all along—eh, Charles ?”

And he turned his face towards Uncle Crabb, who was still limping and fidgeting about.

“I only wish to Heaven I was there, John. I only wish—”

“Ay, ay,—that you and I could buckle on armour for one more charge beside the lad, and one blow against the tallow-eating thieves before we die—God and our Queen ! By Jove, I feel young again !”

And the old soldier rose, with head erect, and extended arm; but, suddenly, the whole view of the case seemed to rush before him — his son's danger, so far away, surrounded by the foe, shut out from supplies or aid; and he sunk back into his chair with a "Heaven help me!"

Newton entered. They tried to interpret his looks, which were grave, but hopeful.

"A great battle has been fought," he said.

"And a great victory won," said Uncle Crabb, resting his hand on Newton's shoulder, and looking into his face. "Is it not so?"

"And a great victory won," added Newton. "Ten thousand Russians have fallen in an attack upon Kars, after a desperate fight, which lasted seven hours. The loss of the Turks is trifling in comparison."

“Hurrah! I said it—I knew it!” said Uncle Crabb, waving his hand aloft. “Hurrah! Then the Russians are thrashed, and in full retreat? They never could stand after such a defeat, accompanied with such slaughter—never! Hurrah!”

And the old gentleman paced about in the greatest excitement.

“I don’t know about that!” said Newton.

“Not know about it? Why, of course they sallied out and pitched into them after such a defeat, eh? Why, you don’t mean to say they’ve made no use of the victory?”

“I haven’t heard that they did. Perhaps, in a day or two, we may hear more.”

“Ah! yes, of course. But if Williams be half the man he’s represented to be, the result cannot be for a moment doubtful. Depend on’t, it’s all over by this.”

“But our son?” said Mrs. Bowers, doubtfully.

“Well, I trust all is well with him. Many of the names of the principal officers who have fallen are mentioned, but I did not see his among them.”

“We’ll hope for the best—we’ll hope for the best. A bloody engagement, indeed! Ten thousand Russians, eh? Do you know if the boy was engaged?—that is, where the attack was made?” asked Mr. Bowers.

“I fancy he must have been in it,” answered Newton, “as the attack was full upon the position where he is stationed. But I hope and trust he has escaped. His name would, I should think, be mentioned if he did not. To-morrow, or next day at the farthest, we shall hear all. Meantime, we must hope for the best. Depend on it, my dear madam—”

And he turned towards Mrs. Bowers, but she had left the room silently; and

after stopping a few minutes to afford whatever information he could, Newton rose to go, and, with a silent pressure of the hand, and a thankful glance from Bessie, which thrilled him with delight, Newton took his leave, and galloped homewards.

As he was passing a thick shrubbery, within half a mile of his house, a man came out of the hedge and called to him :—

“Muster Newton! Muster Newton!”

He stopped. It was Mr. Tightner—not the Tightner we have seen, but a smart, well-dressed, keeper-like-looking fellow, who appeared able and willing to do his duty to his employers, and to look the rest of the world in the face; behind him stood his old, blind bull-dog, with his head sideways—listening.

“Eh! what is it?” asked Newton.

“It’s that ’ere scoundrel, Reeks, sir,

with that 'ere feller, sir, as 'ad used to be squire at Dingham, sir. I told you I expected he was a goin' all wrong to Putney, sir—and now I knows it. Ye see's, he's bin' goin' downwards from bad to wuss, sir, till he's spent his last copper, sir, and ain't got a blessed mag to 'elp hisself with; and I'd known as he'd took up to poarchin' lately, cos I ketched a glint on him in the distance one evenin', comin' out o' Pealed Oaks, sir, and I'll swear he had a gun in his pocket—I knows the dodge too well not to be able to swear to that. Well, sir, Mr. Buncomb sayed as how he wur a passin' the Dog and Rabbit t'other night—that's where the mostes of the poachers here away goes to drink, and gaff, and lay their plants. Well, the Squire, as they still calls him, has took to that 'ouse lately, so I knows by that he's reg'lar hand and glove with 'em. Well, sir, as I was a

sayin', Muster Buncomb was passin' the 'ouse last night. Now, sir, there's one o' them shutters as don't shut quite close to the hinges, and if you puts your ear to it, you can 'ear quite plain anything as is said in or'nary conversation; and Mr. Buncomb, when he ain't seen no one 'andy, says he often gets a hint through that 'ere crack—so, seein' no one worn't about last night, he goes and listens, and he hears as plain as wink, Joe Reeks, and the Squire, and another cove — he worn't quite certain who he was, but thought as 'twas Bill-the-brickey—brickmaker, sir. They was conwersin' low-like; but, as they were sittin' close to the winder, he ketched a good deal of their discourse, and he heard 'em plan to drive and net Pealed Oaks and the Fir Strips to-night, and they was to meet at the stile by Pealed Oaks, at ten o'clock. So Mr. Buncomb ups and tells me, and I've bin'

to the 'ouse twice to-day to see you, on'y you was in town; so I thought you'd most likely be along here about this time, and so I stopped yer; and Mr. Buncomb and Tim—him as I has to watch 'asionally; is down in the ditch by the Hollies, in Pealed Oaks, a watch-in'—for Buncomb's death upon Joe Reeks—he's got him werry often down on the back of his shovel, that's sarten—and so he's wolunteered, and there he is. Now, if you don't mind ridin' back to Crookham, and telling Will that there's a chance of his clearin' scores with the Squire—the Squire turned his sister on the town, sir," said Tightner, apologetically—"I'll give him a chance, d'ye see, and we shall nail 'im."

"No, no—that would be gratifying revenge, and ill might come of it, Tightner. I'll do nothing of the sort; I'll go myself rather—I'll just ride home, put the

nag up, get a thick stick, and join you here in half an hour."

Mr. Tightner tried very hard to persuade Newton against this resolution, saying there would be "hard knocks and no change," and using a variety of similar cogent arguments against it, all of which failed in their object, for Newton somehow felt inclined for a little adventure; he had felt rather dull of late—perhaps a smart tussle and a knock or two would wake him up; and as for the danger, they were four to three, and he'd bring his own man with him to make quite sure. With this resolve he hastened home, and changing his dress, and taking a good stout oak-sapling in his fist, he sallied forth."

His man had gone on an errand, and a boy, his son, took Newton's horse, and thus Newton was obliged to go by himself to Mr. Tightner's assistance. Mr.

Tightner was standing under the shadow of the same hedge where Newton had left him; and on joining him, he again attempted to dissuade Newton from his purpose; but Newton bade him be silent and lead the way.

Accordingly, passing under the shadow of a long hedge, through a large field of swedes, they reached the corner of the cover which Mr. Tightner had spoken of, and, after proceeding some fifty or sixty yards along the side of it, they ensconced themselves in a dry ditch. Now, a crouching attitude in a ditch, whether wet or dry, is anything but agreeable or convenient, when persevered in for any length of time. Half an hour passed away without anything occurring, and the moon began to get up. On their right was rising ground, and the moon began to show over it. On their left lay the wood, solemn and dark. There was no wind, and the night

was very still; occasionally a leaf would fall whispering between the twigs, or the short hop of a rabbit, or the longer one of a hare, might be heard rustling over the leaves, as they left the cover for the swedes. Another half-hour passed by in silence.

"They can't mean comeing, Tightner," whispered Newton.

"Oh, they'll come, sir, never fear; somethin's delayed 'em, that's all."

"Where are Buncomb and Tim?"

"T'other side of the cover, sir,—about two hundred yards or so over there; a whistle 'd bring 'm to us in three minutes. Hallo! what's that?" and Mr. Tightner looked towards the high ground on the right, where the moon now shone brightly. "There it is agen,—yes, it's a dog a drivin' of the turnips. Ah! then they've bin along 'ere afore we come, and the gaps and runs is all netted and

snared, and the dogs is beatin' the fields, while they works the cover inside."

Presently they heard the squeak of a hare, as she rushed headlong into a treble wire snare artistically laid. A minute or two after, a dry stick snapped under the tread of some one in the wood. Then there was a pause; and then the dull muffled explosion of an air-gun, followed by the thud of a pheasant which had been roosting aloft.

"Wot's that?" whispered Tightner.

"It sounds like an air-gun, I should say," answered Newton, grasping his cudgel tighter, and moving a little from his cramped position.

"Oh! a hair-gun; ah! I've heerd the Squire's got one; but I never seen one on 'em. Wouldn't hear that of a windy night. Then that is the Squire hisself. Look out, sir; don't move till I says the when. There's t'others a comin'

along the cover side now, takin' up the nets. Snares can wait till daylight, I s'pose."

Two forms were seen advancing towards them along the cover side, the moon partially revealing them. They stopped, took up a net, and were joined by another person, who came from the wood, and whom they now plainly made out to be the Squire. They were within thirty yards of them. There was a whisper and a suppressed laugh. They advanced again. Two or three rabbits and hares rushed into a net within ten or fifteen yards of the spot where Newton and Tightner lay. The three poachers came up to it, were taking up the net and depositing their capture in a bag, when the shrill scream of Mr. Tightner's whistle rang echoing through the wood from one end to the other, startling the pheasants on their roosts, and making a few withered

leaves which still clung to the boughs apparently tremble, as the deep alleys rang again. Newton and Tightner sprang from the ditch. The poachers for a moment paused irresolute; but, seeing there were only two, the Squire, with a desperate oath, said:—

“There are only two of ’em. Come on, boys; we’ll smash the—”

“Hold off a moment!” said Newton. “Squire Driffeld, I am sorry to see a man, once occupying a respectable position, doing as you do. Listen one moment.” They were about to rush on them. “Listen yet. Give me your word of honour that you will not come here again, and leave the nets and the game you have taken, and go, and you shall hear no more of this.”

“That be ——. Come on, boys; he’s only stalling us off till the others

come up," shouted the Squire ; and the fight began.

It so happened that Mr. Buncomb and Tim had heard the air-gun, and, hearing that it was closer to Tightner than to them, they left their lair, and came quietly slipping along towards where they knew Tightner to be, and arrived on the spot just as the Squire, clubbing his air-gun, rushed upon Mr. Tightner, who stood in front. An ineffectual blow or two was aimed and exchanged, when they were separated by one of the poachers' dogs and old Jack, Tightner's blind bull-dog, who came rolling over and over between them.

Tightner had just time to deal Bill-the-brickey, as he was called, a staggering right-handed smack on the side of the jaw with his fist, which left him an easy prey to Tim, who, following up the attack, got him down, and, amidst a

storm of horrible oaths and imprecations, pinioned him, and tied his hands and feet, when Tightner found himself again opposed to the Squire.

Newton had had enough to do with one of the poachers' dogs, which seized him by the thigh, and held on there. Clutching the dog's throat firmly with his left hand, and compressing it with all his strength, he forced the half-strangled brute to quit his hold; and although the beast struggled, with its eyes protruding, and its teeth gasping and grinning at him ghastlily, he continued to hold him till, finding his grasp grow weak, he seized the dog with his other hand by the skin of the belly, and lifting it up as high as he could, dashed it with all his force upon the ground, where it lay stunned and motionless.

At this moment, as he turned round, he saw Tightner raise his arm to protect

his head, and he saw the stoek of the Squire's air-gun descend full upon it, and beating it down, come with great violence on Tightner's skull ; his hat was off, and Tightner fell to the ground bleeding and senseless.

Newton picked up his stick, which he had laid down for a moment, and turned upon the Squire.

"Whoosh" went the gunstock just over Newton's head.

Newton saw it coming, and ducked in time, and returned the compliment by a severe blow on the Squire's left ankle ; and before the Squire could recover his presence of mind, another blow on the temple laid him beside his late opponent.

Meanwhile, Mr. Buncomb and his abhorrence, Joe Reeks, had been going through the most systematic pugilistic encounter.

“ Joe ! ” said Mr. Buncomb, “ I’ve got ye ! ”

“ Dom’d if ye have ! ” said Joe ; “ I’ll vight ’ee vor a varden ! ”

Joe had no stick, nor had Buncomb, so they pummelled each other with right good will, and bloody noses, black eyes, and contused ribs became the order of the night.

No sooner, however, did Reeks see the Squire go down than, making a feint at Mr. Buncomb, he suddenly lowered his head, and butted him like a ram ; and, before Mr. Buncomb could be aware of his intention or avoid the blow, it came full against his waistcoat, and he felt, as he was being pitched over (as he afterwards described it), as if “ an airthquake or a ’lectric fluid had gone through him ; and springing over Buncomb’s prostrate form, Joe Reeks made off, followed by his dog, which had been mauling poor old Jack, whose teeth prevented him

from being of much service in the fighting way, and both of them got clear away, greatly to Buncomb's chagrin, who had determined on his capture *in flagrante*.

The Squire was pinioned, and, on returning to consciousness, found that he was tied to the brickmaker. They were conducted with some difficulty to the nearest police-station, where, to end with them, they were sent to the assizes ; and there being several other little matters against the brickmaker, he was transported for seven years ; while the Squire got, for his murderous assault on Tightner, twelve months' imprisonment, with hard labour, and came out of prison a finished scoundrel, ending his career finally by joining his quondam associate.

Poor Tightner was severely hurt. His arm was broken ; and he sustained such injury on his head, that he was dangerously ill for some time.

Newton found, on reaching home, that his thigh was much mangled, and had bled so profusely that his boot was full of blood, and although he was not sensible of any particular pain under the excitement, yet, when he got home, he felt so weak and giddy from loss of blood, that he almost fainted. He went to bed immediately, and was obliged to keep there for some days.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM WHICH ONE EVENT IN THE CONCLUSION MAY
BE CONFIDENTLY PREDICTED.

NEARLY two months had passed, and winter had again bound the fields in its frozen armour. Newton was seated in a capacious easy-chair, with his leg resting on another. His father had gone for a walk, and was valiantly stumping about over his estate, taking a constitutional, with a thick stick in his hand, and striving to appear the bluff country-gentleman attended by his bailiff. Great was he in sheep, wethers, lambs, and ewes—deep in

mangold-wurzel, and profound in swedes. Pursing his lips, and occasionally tapping the buttons of his gaiters with his stick, he gave his opinion to Mr. Watkins, the bailiff (Buncombe's brother-in-law).

"Just what I was going to remark, Watkins. My opinion exactly, Watkins—very good, indeed, Watkins—mangold-wurzel, of course, Watkins — of course."

"No, sir—begging pardon, sir—swedes. Swedes and hay, sir," Mr. Watkins put in.

"Of course—of course, when I say wurzel, I—of course, I—mean swedes and hay. So swedes and hay let it be, and that's settled."

"Then there's them Down-ers, sir. It's time they was took in, sir."

"Quite right, Watkins. They seem very fat, and in good condition. I'll speak to the butcher about them directly."

Mr. Watkins turned aside to hide a

laugh, and coughed and blew his nose violently.

“No, sir, it’s not that, sir—quite the other, sir. Ye know, sir, they’ll be down of lambing mortal early; and it’s too exposed like, and too fur from home like, for ’em up here, so I thought of movin’ ’em down to Oatlands.”

“Ah, yes—oh!—eh?—lambing!—to be sure they will. I forgot about that—yes. Let me see, there’s exactly—just—ah! two, four—”

“A score and a half o’ *them*, sir.”

“A score and a half—ah! yes; and when they’ve been a—confined—that is, when they’ve pupped—foaled, I should say—”

“Lambed down, sir.”

“Lambed down—exactly what I was going to observe—they’ll be worth—just—oh! they’ll be worth—let me see—exactly —”

“ It’s onpossible to say ezactly wot they’ll fetch, ’cause it’s ’cording to the sca’city or plenty o’ roots and sech feed ; but they’ll fetch a tidy penny in.”

“ They *will* fetch a tidy penny—no doubt of it.”

And thus Mr. Dogvane would discuss his stock and agricultural pursuits and prospects, fancying all the time that he ordered and Watkins advised. Fortunately, Watkins was thoroughly honest and trustworthy, and the old gentleman did not lose a great deal of money over his hobby.

But we must get back to Newton. As we have said, he was sitting in an easy chair, with his leg upon another chair. The leg would have been well long since, had he not somewhat rashly ridden to London just as it was healing over, to procure some intelligence from Kars.

Kars had fallen about a week or so

before, and the object for which the heroic Williams was sent there was satisfactorily accomplished. No news had reached home of the fugitive. The news of Vincent's death had arrived some time before, and by the same mail a large packet of letters had arrived for Uncle Crabb. On the receipt of these (so Newton had been informed by Bessie), after the first glance at them, he had retired to his room, where he was heard for hours after walking up and down in an agitated manner; and when at length he descended to the parlour, he looked terribly careworn and troubled, and the traces of deep grief, and even tears, were observed on his countenance. As he said nothing, and did not in any way refer to the letters he had received, no one ventured to allude to it; but, feeling that he had received some sad news, which he felt unequal to the relation of,

no one thought of intruding their unsought sympathy upon him.

For many days after, his whole manner and being seemed changed. He would start away in the morning into the woods, refusing all offers of company or attendance, and walk there for hours by himself, until his friends became sorely troubled at the change which had taken place in him.

But a still more terrible damp fell on the spirits of all our friends. They could gain no news of their lost one. Kars had fallen indeed; but how he had sped, or whither he had gone—whether he had escaped or fallen before the foe—no one could surmise. All was sad and bitter conjecture, mingled with deep apprehension.

Mrs. Bowers, with Bessie and Charlotte, had called about an hour before, to sit for half-an-hour with Newton; and Newton

was now partly ruminating on their visit, and partly trying to speculate on the fate of his friend.

“You see,” said Newton to himself, and laying down the case as though he were endeavouring to assure Mrs. Bowers, although she was not present, “you see, my dear madam, if the Russians entered on the 29th, and you heard that he was safe on the 12th, we may fairly imagine that the blockade was so strict as to prevent any transmission of letters after that; therefore, of course, you could not have have heard; you see that. Well, then; supposing them to have marched out on the 28th or 9th, you could hardly have heard; though they might, there’s no denying that.”

The last sentence was addressed to himself.

“And one would think he would have written,” he continued, thinking.

Then aloud :—

“Of course, his duties, you know, and the hurry of military business, and the affairs of the capitulation might have prevented him. Indeed, he might not have had time to write. But, then, how is it we don’t see his name on the list? Eh—egad, that looks very queer—very ugly. Poor dear Ned; I don’t know what to think. Curse that crow; what on earth does he sit croaking there for? The beast seems determined to bear evil tidings, and croak his infernal intelligence of evil, as if he had been on the spot and seen something—something confoundedly terrible, you know; day after day he comes and sits there, and croaks my very soul out.

“Caw, caw, caw-aw,” went a huge crow, seated upon a lofty bough on a neighbouring elm.

“Oh! I say, you know—this is too

bad," said Newton, with all the nervous irritability of an invalid.

"Caw, caw, waw," went the thing again.

"I really cannot stand it. Hang it, you know—he's a regular raven of omen—a beast of the most diabolical kind," continued Newton, addressing the chandelier, and half rising with a resolve to do something. "A perfect limb of the Evil One. Oh, you beast!"

And he shook his fist at it as the bird continued:—

"Caw waw, cauk, cauk."

"I won't stand this any longer. If I do, I—I'm—I'm somethinged;" and limping to the bell, he pulled it violently.

A man-servant appeared.

"James, bring me my rifle."

"Yessir; and some hot water and the scourin' rod, yessir," quoth James, going.

"Not a bit of it. Bring me that small flask out of that side-board drawer," and he pointed to it; "and pick out the brightest, cleanest, and roundest bullet you can find, and give me one of those patches just under the flask. That's it;" and Newton received the various articles as they were brought to him.

"Caw, waw, waw, wauk."

"Ah, I'll make you walk, you brute, in a minute or two;" and he occupied himself in loading the rifle very carefully. "Now, James, open that glass-door very softly. Stop a moment;" and he wheeled his chair round, so as to command the door perfectly. "Now then," and sitting down, he raised the piece as James opened the door, very cautiously, according to orders, but with no little surprise on his face. "Confound it, how my hand shakes! I can't cover him. That's better."

“Caw, caw—”

“Cauk,” finished Newton, as the smart report of the rifle rang throughout the room, and the crow, stopping suddenly in his croak, fell headlong from the tree.”

“It’s that ’ere old beggar with the blue neck and the white feather in his wing, sir,” said James, bringing the bird in. The werry one as Tightner never could fix.”

“I’m sorry I yielded to my nervous vexation. But—there—it can’t be helped now; I daresay he’s devoured pheasant’s and partridge’s eggs not a few.”

“Ah, that he has, sir, and young ones, too, likewise chickings—”

“Well, nail him upon the barn, James,” and Newton again subsided into thought.

Several days passed by, and still no news. A week—ten days—a fortnight—

the suspense became terrible. Mr. Bowers grew visibly older and more bent; and Mrs. Bowers even tottered in her walk, and acquired a habit of talking to herself, not pleasant to hear. The girls grew restless, pale, and fidgety—always on the look-out, under a constant wearing strain of expectation. Charlotte was the most cheerful; but then she had received good news of *an early return* from the East.

Newton, who was now able to get about well with the use of a stick, and was fast getting up health and strength again, was all that the kindest brother and the most considerate, attentive son could be; but still the deepest anxiety and suspense prevailed.

At length, one morning, they were sitting at breakfast, when the post came in. The correspondence was turned over hastily, with many a sigh; another morning—no letter, no news.

One letter, a dirty scrap of a thing, lay aside, half neglected; Charlotte took it up—

“Some bill or begging-letter, I suppose,” she said, breaking the envelope slowly, in answer to a look from Bessie. The contents were in another envelope; that too was slowly opened; and glancing at them, she suddenly started and turned as pale as death, then flushed again.

“Read it, dear,” said Mrs. Bowers, who had noticed her agitation; “I can bear it—anything better than suspense.”

It was but a few lines from Ned, a hurried scrawl:—

“I know not whether this will ever reach you, as it comes by a chance hand. We are going to give up Kars; though I feel sure if we had come out a month or six weeks since, we could

have thrashed Mouravieff. But that's all no use now. Our privations have been severe; but, thank God, I am in good health, and sound in wind and limb. Kolman and Kmety have determined to cut their way through the Russians, and Lavitzky joins them. I shall also make one of the party; we have not yet decided the hour we shall start at; but I suppose it will be about midnight. Farewell. Another twelve hours will decide my fate. If I escape, you will soon hear from me, perhaps see me. If I fall—forgive and bless your poor Ned. Here comes Lavitzky; he says I have not a moment to lose. God bless you all.

“In haste,

“NED.”

A dead silence, for a moment or two followed the reading of this. No one

liked to speak or say what they feared.

"*They* escaped three weeks ago, or nearly four, and we have heard nothing," said Uncle Crabb, dreamily, "nothing. I'll go over to Dogvane's this instant. He's the only person who seems able to suggest anything, or to look at things sensibly and clearly;" and, bustling up, the old gentleman took his hat and stick, and sallied forth, leaving the family sick with deferred hope and fear, and almost verging on despair.

"I tell you, I've been thinking about it all night, Bessie, and I've made up my mind to go. I'm not by any means satisfied that—that he's—a—that is, you know—I can't say it. He may be wounded, or—a—taken prisoner by robbers, or a hundred things. I'll ransack Asia Minor; and if money and

determination can find him, I'll bring him back to you, if he's there alive—and I feel sure he is. As to strong enough and well enough, I'm strong and well enough for anything. I only carry this confounded stick because I've become used to it;" and he threw it away from him. "You see, I sat up studying the map last night with Uncle Crabb, and, do you know—it's one of the most singular things—I can't make it out—but he's actually determined to go with me? He has, indeed. Well, you may look surprised."

"But you never consented, dear Newton, to allow him to undertake such a journey, even with—with you to attend and take care of him."

"I suspect," answered Newton, "that he's a deal more likely to take care of me. I never saw a man possessed of such cool, calculating determination upon a point.

I tried, of course, all I could, to dissuade him; but he cut me short so sternly and decisively, that I had not a word to say.

"Indeed!" said Bessie, stopping, and looking up at Newton with wondering surprise.

They were walking up and down the avenue in front of the house, Newton having driven over immediately after breakfast to announce his intention.

"Yes," answered Newton. "He said, 'Sir, you attempt to dissuade me from a duty. I have my own reasons for going; and even if you refused to go with me, I should go by myself. I presume I've arrived at the years of discretion, sir; I presume that I know what I am going to do, and what my own intentions are? Not another word, sir,—not another word.' What could I say? I—that is, you know, I—why, I shut up, and he took the map,

traced the route out, and arranged everything—and in eight-and-forty hours from this, we start for Constantinople, where we get a firman, a sort of passport, and from there we proceed to Trebizond, or perhaps Batoum. It depends upon how we find things are going on there, when we get to Constantinople. So now it's all settled, and there's no more to be said about it."

"Oh, Newton! how good—how kind of you to do this for us! What claim have we on you, that you should incur such risk, such danger and difficulty, for us? What—what—"

And poor Bessie paused, almost in tears.

"Claim!—pooh!—fiddle-de-dee! Claim? Why, every claim. Isn't Ned my oldest and dearest friend? and doesn't it almost break my heart—if a man can break his heart—to see your dear mother and father daily and hourly weighed down and slowly

devoured, as one might say, by grief and suspense? Shouldn't I be a brute, unworthy to walk on—on two legs," said Newton, in sheer desperation for a simile, "if I didn't do what I could to alleviate such distress as I daily see the cruelest evidences of in those I love and respect almost as much as my own father and mother?"

And Newton waxed eloquent, and flourished his arm till he knocked his knuckles smartly against a tree.

"Confound it!" he continued, putting his hand in his pocket, "I should be a— a regular cow, you know, if I didn't do it—and *you* left behind, too, to see after my old folks—you must, you know, because *they'll* have no one to cheer *them* up."

"You know I will, Newton," said Bes-sie, with a half-sob. "I'll be like a daughter to them, I'm sure."

“And when we all return together, well and jolly as—as—as possible, you know, oh! then won’t you?—that is—”

There was a deal of hesitation and flurry in Newton’s speech and manner at this point.

“I meant to say, wouldn’t you be—” And he paused again. “Hang me, if I know how to say it!”

“What is it you would say, Newton?” said the malicious little gipsy, in a tone of trembling, frightened innocence, painfully assumed.

“Why—I—that is—wouldn’t you be a real daughter to them? That’s what I mean!”

And he bolted it out desperately.

“Ah, Newton! you ask where you may command.” And Bessie looked up, a delicious conglomeration of smiles, tears, and blushes. “How could I refuse?”

“But you don’t mean to say right out that you will—and—and—”

And Newton paused in perplexed and amusing astonishment.

“Why not, if I am honest in my affection? Does it offend you?”

“Offend me! Good heavens!—no—off—no! I’m in the seven hundred thousandth heaven of happiness and astonishment at my good fortune! It’s a bargain, mind,” he continued, very seriously, as if he wished to secure his position beyond a doubt.

“A bargain!” repeated Bessie; “there’s my seal on it!”

And giving him her hand, she looked up in his face, her own glowing crimson.

Oh! that curving, undulating, double line of swelling coral! Oh, cherries and peaches! Oh, murder and turf! Oh, holy Moses! What did Newton do? Precisely what any other gentleman would have done under the circumstances,—*he* sealed the bargain, *too*. Smack!—he was not satisfied with once—smack! I don’t believe he was

satisfied with twice—sma-ack—it's almost a question whether he'd have been satisfied with three times, had not "A-whurra!" something between a cough and a sneeze, burst from some one just behind them.

It really was too bad of him; but, when they looked round, there stood Uncle Crabb! He had walked along the turf, so that they did not hear him coming; and he now stood, looking with an air of quaint surprise from the one to the other culprit.

"Upon my word, Miss Bessie Bowers, this is pretty well! pretty fair! very promising for a modest young lady to be—"

"Uncle! uncle!"

And Bessie's face was buried in his bosom.

"Hands off, you minx!"

But she wouldn't.

"Upon my word, sir!"

And he turned to Newton, who stood

covered with confusion, and blushing to the very roots of his hair.

"We were—that is—we were talking about—the capitulation—"

"Oh! the capitulation! Well, it was rather sudden; and you don't seem to have starved the fortress!"

And he moved Bessie's face from his bosom a moment, looked lovingly into her eyes, kissed her tenderly, and then replaced the face, patting her head, and fondling her long curls, as he continued:

"There's a great deal to be done before you have my consent to this, sir. It's no time to talk soft nonsense now; when you've earned her, she shall be yours—not before. You know what I mean."

"I'll do anything that man can do honestly, sir," said Newton, bravely.

"I know you will—I feel you will, my boy; I don't think I've mistaken you. There! God knows it's not for me—an

old, withered, childless stump, to curtail your happiest moments. They're few, alas! for any of us; for sorrow comes soon—soon—oh! good God, how soon! how bitterly!”

And again kissing Bessie, and wringing Newton's hand warmly as he gave her back to him, he dashed a tear aside and strode rapidly past him towards the house.

Newton looked round to speak to him, but a bend in the avenue hid him from his sight; and when he again turned to speak to Bessie, she was gone too.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

It is a fine afternoon in early summer. All Crookham seems astir. The very village is in an excitable and simmering condition. There you may see at the village-green, conversing in knots, the gossips of the place.

The village blacksmith leans over the low half-door to interchange a word or two with Bungey the tailor, the arbiter eleg——. No, I don't think his trowsers could be called elegant, for they display

that peculiar cut which fairly and strictly entitles them to be called "bags," as modern slang hath it. Bungey's cut is famous for a mile round.

"When air they expected, Mr. Bungey?" asks the smith.

Whereupon Mr. Bungey, who is of a talkative and highly imaginative disposition, enters into a very long disquisition, commencing with how "Job Hawkins come in that very morning to be measured for &c., &c., and Job says, says he —, and I says to Job, says I," getting thence by a singular process into the last parish row about the latest new pump, and thence again into a wider survey of politics in general, embracing Bungey's views of the history of the war, with a slight description (and this was always a certainty) of how Bungey was called out in 1812, including the relation of the campaign of Chigley Hurst (a neigh-

bouring common, where the militia of the period had had a field-day, Bungey being trumpeter), bringing in also the venerable and right reverend joke of the goose and the pig, which all Crookham had heard very many thousands of times ; then gliding into the subject of the late Sir William Vasey's nurse, whom Bungey remembered, "and she was a Cartholic, she was—leastways, always crossed herself, she did ; yes, she did, and I'm telling you the facts, I am ; yes. Well, she come from furring parts, she did, French parts may be ; for we was expectin' Boneypart then, and I used to, &c., &c., (more about 1812), "and Boneypart, he was a Frenchman, you know, he was, that's wot he was, same as this un is, which there's no trusting of a Frenchman ; you never knows when they'll have you, you don't ; for I remember " (extracts of Bungey's experience of a Frenchman who " had

him," with anecdotes thereof, back again, at the word "furriner," to Sir William Vasey's nurse) "a sittin' in that there very rumble, as it was a dusty day, I mind, and they come round that there very highdentickle corner, wi' six osses at a gallop, jest the same as them we're a expecting now. For furrin parts *is* furrin parts, and you can't never say to a minit when you're a going to return from 'em, no you can't, for you may be blowed up in a steam-boat, or get took by a privateer in the wery mouth of the Thames itself, you may; still, a hour or two 'aint no objick, of a fine day like this; and 'long-expected's come at last,' perhaps in an hour, perhaps later, what odds? Still, talkin' *is* dry work; and he thinks he'll go across to the Grapes and have half-a-pint." Exit Bungey, thirstily; whilst Smith, after looking Grapeward for one minute, and

wiping first his brow and then his mouth with the back of his wrist, exits for the same purpose, and joins the knot of eager talkers assembled at the Grapes.

But if there is great excitement in the village, there is a restless and never-ceasing activity at Mr. Bowers's; not a moment passes, but some one runs from the house to the gate. Will, the man, has posted himself up in the hedge, at the corner of the road, so as to command a long sight; he has been there ever since about six o'clock in the morning, and it is now half-past three in the afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Dogvane are at Mr. Bowers's, and Sir John Vasey is there, and the girls are full of anxiety, and run constantly to look out of the gate; and oh, that blessed avenue! how many hundred times have twinkling feet tripped up and down it since sunrise.

There is a great improvement visible in the appearance of both Mr. and Mrs. Bowers. They haven't looked so well or so cheerful for months as they have done to-day.

"What o'clock is it, dear?" asks Mrs. Bowers for the three hundredth time.

"Twenty-nine minuth to four, ma," answers Sissy, who is like a wild fawn in her movements.

"Dear me! aint they very—? Is it possible any—?"

"Law, ma! don't worry yourthelf; you know they can't be here muth before four. So now do, there'th a dear, dear old mam, do jutht (kissing her), do be—"

"Hark!" and Mrs. Bowers straightens herself up suddenly, and listens, trembling violently. "It is—wheels!"

"Only the butcher's cart, dear; don't be excited," said Charlotte.

"It's not," said the old lady, almost fiercely. "I've heard that for twenty years, and should know the sound well. It's the galloping of horses; I hear it."

They all listened. Will comes tumbling down all of a heap, anyhow, out of his perch; sprawls in the dust—up head over heels—rushes towards the gate with his hat off, his hair streaming wildly, his eyes unnaturally extended, owing to the vigil he had kept, and shouts, "A yaller po'-chay and four 'osses a gallopin' like mad."

"Lead me in, Edward," said Mrs. Bowers, faintly. "Your arm, Charlotte, my love. The—the—sun is oppressive."

The galloping approaches. Round the corner whirls the post-chaise. Crack! crack! up the avenue, dashing the gravel, crashing the shrubs. It hasn't quite drawn up, before Will has the steps down and the door open. Out steps Captain

Stevens, now Colonel ; out steps Newton ; out steps Uncle Crabb, in deep mourning. A shriek almost rose to Mrs. Bowers's lips when—no—yes—who is that tall soldierly fellow, in undress uniform, with the handsome bronzed face, and the long dark moustache, and heavy beard and whisker, with one arm in a sling, who is helped out with some little difficulty ? It never can be. But, nonsense—there, of course it is—what's the use of trifling ? It's Ned ; and that good-looking foreigner on the box is Lavitzky.

Shall we attempt to describe the meeting ? Certainly not ; for this is a passage which is peculiarly one of those where description loses its force. It won't come up to imagination, so imagination must make up for the loss of it."

Hours later, they were still conversing.

"So you know all about the siege, and all about the capitulation, as far as the

papers gave it you ; but we shall all know more about it by-and-by—eh Lavitzky ? ”

“ I seenk so. It vill all be plain, my frent, too late to be of good for you. The fortress is gone ; your prestige is gone with it. The East is not resemble to England. The Russians gain greatly by that loss. You haf been imperial ; no longer so. What thinks the ignorant ? England was great ; Russia is greater. He knows no better than fact. Time will show.”

“ By Jove, he’s right, you know ; right as the mail,” said Ned. “ Well, as I was saying, we somehow missed Kolman and Kmety ; they started before us, and we, thinking to overtake them, followed them ; but we got into the wrong track, and fell upon a lot of Cossack beggars. There were but three of us. It was out sabre and at ’em. We broke through them like a flash of lightning. Poor Dandy !

I saw him get a lance thrust; but the brave fellow hung on somehow, though we were forced to leave him, in that struggle for life, amongst the snowdrifts of Lazistan, where he laid down and died of exhaustion. We went back the next day to look for his body, but we never found it. Two days after, we were attacked, whilst we were still in the mountains, by a troop of horsemen. Fortunately, I had a brace of revolvers, and Lavitzky one, so we emptied seven or eight of their saddles for them before they left us; and the power of those tools so completely staggered them, that they bolted like a flock of sheep—not before I got the pistol-shot in my arm, which proved so troublesome afterwards. It was a fortunate attack though, as it turned out for us—eh, Lavitzky?”

“We should haf starve bot for that,” answered Lavitzky.

“Our horses, which weren’t wonderful at the outset, as you may imagine—mere skin and grief, you know—were clean beaten; so we made an advantageous exchange. And then we found some grub and some ammunition, and we borrowed a shawl or two from the bodies of the robbers we had knocked over; and altogether, barring the pistol shot, the visit was a seasonable one, for the next night was awful. We had to camp out, and make our horses lie down as a sort of rampart, to shield us from the wind, which was like razors and needle-points. At Artvin my wound became so painful, and my arm so swollen, I knocked up. Thanks to Lavitzky, who had some little knowledge of surgery, I have it still. Indeed, without his help and his knowledge in every way, I should have—have stopped two or three times on the road home, and never have got any further.”

Who wouldn't have been Lavitzky, could they have seen the glances bestowed upon him?

"The advantage was mutual, my frent. Needer could have escaped wisout ze oder."

"Don't see that; but never mind. At Artvin, as I said, I knocked up, and there I was, regularly down with fever. I don't know how long I was there—Lavitzky says six weeks—before I got to the turning point. But I'm sure it was touch and go with me once or twice, and, ut for Lavitzky's constant attention and kind nursing—well, well—there, I won't." This was in answer to a gesture of dissatisfaction from Lavitzky, who again became the centre of attraction. "However, it did turn at last. I was just able to leave my room, and get about in the open air a bit, when Newton and Uncle Charles charged full on to us."

"It was very fortunate that by so singular a chance we should happen on your messenger at Batoum, or we might have wandered about, inquiring and searching after you for months, without finding you. Still I felt sure that you would make for the nearest seaports, and that, if you were alive, we should hear of you between them and Kars, and my surmise turned out right."

"Very fortunate. I never was so glad to see anyone in my life, for our purses were stripped of their last piastre, and we were completely floored. I think I'll smoke a weed outside. Siss, you young scamp, wheel that easy-chair out through the glass-door. The evening is very pleasant; some of you may like to join us. How familiar the old garden seems! How I remember every tree and shrub! How often I used to call them up during my solitary walks along the lines of Kars!"

“There’s one thing I’ve never ventured to mention,” said Newton, as he and Ned stood leaning against the wall; “I can’t understand what Uncle Charles would insist upon that week’s journey by himself for. Of course, one couldn’t ask, the information not being volunteered. But, seeing that we as near as possible lost our passage by it, it was something most singular. What could he want to go to Kars for?”

“He went to the grave of his son.”

“His—eh? what?”

“His son. Vincent Sartoris—or Vincent Bowers his name really was—was his son. Well you may look surprised, and yet not be so surprised as I was when Vincent told me all. Some day, uncle may tell you more about it; but he is usually very reserved, and probably would not speak, even to me, of it. When he was a young man, he married a very beautiful Spanish girl, and brought her away to England.

Her family were very rigid Catholics—bigoted indeed—regularly in the hands of the Jesuits; and before they had been married three years, happening to have to go to Lisbon on business, the monks, or the family, or some of them, got hold of her and her two children during his temporary absence, and got her away, and shut her up—where, he never could discover, though for years he sought her, and used every endeavour to find her and his children, without effect; and well it might be so, for they were actually in a religious house, closely watched and guarded, in the neighbourhood of London, while he sought her in Spain. She died at length; but not before she had told her eldest son, Vincent, the whole truth. He assumed the name of Sartoris. Poor Vincent! He was a noble fellow, but curious on some points; he held strange views and opinions of men and things, as you know. The

story he told us of Charley Sacheverel and the duel was quite true; only Charley Sacheverel was his younger brother. He did not tell us everything, because he had some object in finding out whether the truth was known to me. He wanted to know how his father was likely to regard him, or something of that sort. He fell, as you know, at Kars; and the evening that he fell, some hours before, he told me all. Alas, we buried him! What a dreary night it was! I sent a long letter, containing a full account of what I had heard, and also one or two from Vincent himself, mentioning the packet of letters and other papers, to Uncle Charles, according to Vincent's desire, which letters he had always carried in his bosom, and I retained, fearing to trust them by post, as there were deeds of importance among them; and that brought Uncle Charles out; and naturally

he wished to see the grave of his son, too, and I believe he had a tomb erected over it, and everything done that could be done, and—but they are coming out. It really is a beautiful evening.”

A day or two after this, Ned was leaning against the old sun-dial in the middle of the garden, when Uncle Crabb, who had been writing several letters, came out of the house and joined him.

“Well, my valiant contingent,”—this was the way in which Uncle Crabb had been in the habit of addressing Ned of late, as alluding to his service in the Turkish Contingent)—“well, my valiant contingent, what are your future plans? Have you had enough of the soldiering line, or will you continue in the gallant corps? or what will you do?”

“Really, uncle, I hardly know. It’s a question I have often thought about of late. As for continuing in the soldiering

line, as you call it, I don't see how I am to, even if I felt inclined, which I don't. It isn't that I dislike the service, or the fighting, or anything of that kind," said Ned, seeing a look of surprise steal over his uncle's countenance. "Not a bit of it; for there's a wild delight and excitement in it that makes one's blood tingle, after the first distaste is overcome. There's a kind of self-reliance it imposes upon a man, which makes a man of him, and there's constant novelty and constantly fresh materials for study. And if one could win the rewards such a career *ought* to offer, by long and honest service, or by superior talent and attainment, by hard study or high courage and daring, and all those qualities it seems to me a soldier should possess, why, I should like it well enough. But when I see the highest rewards bestowed upon men who have the most damaged our fair fame;

when I see men admirals and colonels, who have never, or hardly ever, smelt powder, and lieutenants who have served half over the world; when I hear of brave old admirals shooting themselves, as the only way of preserving their honour—why, I don't look upon either branch of the service as an employment or career which one need desire particularly to belong to. No; I thought, perhaps, if I could find any kind of civil berth abroad, where one could make a little competence in a few years—no matter about danger, or sickly climate, or anything of that sort—a man must run some risk, you see—why, I—”

“How strange such an idea should occur to you.”

“Yes! Why, you see, English society is very tame, very rotten, and butter-milky. Look at the men. I used to like them very well once; but now, somehow, Vincent's society, and his death, and all together,

it seems to have changed me ; and I should, I must say, like to be able to live free and independent. My ideas would be very moderate. I think a couple or three hundred a year would do it ; somewhere on the wildest coast of Ireland or Scotland, with fishing and shooting, deer-stalking and seal-shooting, boating, saving wrecks, and all that sort of thing—no snobs, no gents, no humbugs to turn one's stomach—that's what, in a few years, I should like to retire to, so that, if I liked, I could pack up my traps at a minute's notice and be off to South America, or Central Africa, or wherever I chose, with gun, and rod, and perhaps one companion, and travel anywhere 'in search of adventures.' ”

“It is, as I said before, very strange, because I have it in my power, Teddy, my boy, to offer you the very thing you desire. You know all about my—my—wife ? ”

Ned gave a short nod.

“ She left some largish estates in the Havannah. They have come to me at last ; for most of the family are dead, I find ; and those who are left desire to repair the wrong done to me, and so have facilitated my obtaining possession of them, in every way in their power, and I have them, in spite of priest or devil. The present manager of the estates, Mr. —, desires to come home to England, having in a few years amassed a considerable fortune, and his health failing, he wishes to be relieved. Now, here is just the opportunity for you. You can easily, if you like, by giving attention to those estates, and to other branches of trade which may come within your reach, also make a handsome fortune in a few years, and yet do me justice too. You must, of course, go to a first-rate accountant’s for three or four months, and

learn arithmetic, pick up commercial ideas and business habits, and so forth, all of which, of course, you are profoundly ignorant of now. Then you will go to Havannah. Mr. — will remain with you for six months, in order to give you every information, and to put you in the way of managing matters; after which, he will come home, and you will remain there master. Ten years will probably realise you a handsome independence, such as you desire, and at four or five and thirty you can retire, come home, and pick up a wife—or, if you still prefer it, sling your hammock amongst the wildest of the Celtic tribes, or practise rifle-shooting amongst the Patagonians and Kaffirs.

“Not another word need be said on it,” said Ned, shaking his uncle’s hand warmly, “not a word. It’s a bargain. I’ll fish up some musty accountant, and worry his life out for the next three

months; and if I can't square the circle of double extra entry, and all that sort of thing, in three months, call me a noodle, and make me an attaché."

"Take a day or two to consider it," said Uncle Crabb.

"Not an hour! What's the use of considering whether I shall open my mouth, when a fellow offers me pudding and I'm hungry? Of course I'll go. And won't I make the niggers 'Walk Jaw-bone,' of an evening, to the banjo and bones? 'Get away, black man, don't you come a-nigh me!' Yaw, yaw!"—and, snapping his fingers, Ned fairly danced into the house, to his sister's great astonishment.

A few weeks after this, Uncle Crabb was stalking along through Dingham-lane, with Newton on one arm and Bessie on the other. He had requested their company for a little stroll.

"I want you two," he said to them;

“to take a stroll with me, and to come and look at a purchase I have lately made.”

And as they had not the most distant idea of what the purchase might be—whether an estate, or a house, or a horse, or cow, or what—they went with him, slightly wondering as they came to Rose-dale, as the cottage which Mrs. Spelthorne had vacated was called.

Uncle Crabb drew a key from his pocket, and opened the gate with the air of a man who was accustomed to do so.

Their surprise, however, was much increased, on looking up, to find that the cottage had changed its name, and was called “Crabb’s End.” It was not, perhaps, quite so euphonious as Rosedale, but it was a deal more significant.

“Good gracious, uncle,” said Bessie; “why, you don’t mean to say that you’ve bought it? Why, you’ve been actually building

on to it too—and you've quite re-formed the grounds ; and so you really mean to commence house-keeping on your own account ? ”

“ Yes, pet, yes — I — that is, I may, if I can find a housekeeper to my mind. I thought at first about advertising for one ; but I don't know, I think I've found one without.”

“ You'd find it difficult to meet with one to suit you,” said Bessie, with a merry glance at him.

“ I don't know that—I've had one in my eye some time now, who'll do admirably. Come in. There—how do you like that ? ”

And entering the new part of the building, he threw open the door of one of the snuggest of snug rooms, furnished *à merveille* for an old bachelor, with book-cases, and a choice collection of books in them.

“You see, I hate to have to go up into a cold library whenever I want to refer to or get a book, so here I have 'em at hand, complete. D'ye think it's comfortable?”

“Oh! it's perfectly charming—quite in keeping. You've every appliance for comfort and luxury.”

“So, that's my sitting-room; and here,” crossing the passage, and opening another door; “here's my bedroom; beyond that is the man's room, and beyond that again a little kitchen.”

“But—but—there is plenty of kitchen accommodation, if I remember right; what could you want with another kitchen?”

“Why, I like to have a kitchen of my own. Ah, you see, if one should not be on good terms with one's house-keeper, one would like to retire to one's den, with only a man, whom you could

fling boot-jacks at, and who's paid to stand it, and growl at one's ease."

"Oh! I see; so you mean to play hermit when you like. But—but you seem to have a great deal more room here than you can possibly require," continued Bessie, as they passed on to the other part of the house.

"Oh! these are the housekeeper's apartments, and I shall, of course, come here occasionally,—so I've made them tolerably comfortable;" and entering a handsome little dining-room, beautifully, perfectly furnished, they paused. It was completeness itself.

On the *buffet* was a handsome service of plate.

Newton was loud in his admiration of this room.

"It was," he declared, "all that comfort and elegance could require."

“I’m glad you like it,” said Uncle Crabb, “for I hope to see you to dine here occasionally ; that is, as often as you like, you know ;” and Uncle Crabb chuckled as if he had said something highly humorous ; it was the first time since his return that Bessie had seen him do so.

The drawing-room, too, was a gem—“a love of a room,” Bessie declared it to be. It opened into a tasteful conservatory, filled with choice plants ; at one end of the room, with a cover over it, was apparently some dearly-cherished picture.

“That’s the likeness of the housekeeper I’ve had in my eye so long, my dear,” said Uncle Crabb, following Bessie’s eye ; “I keep it veiled, because I cherish it so dearly. However, you may see it, if you like ;” and flinging back the drapery, a large pier-glass, reflecting Bessie full-length in it, stood revealed to view.

Uncle Crabb sat down on one of the couches, and positively laughed at Bessie's astonishment.

"What! *me* to be your housekeeper! I don't see. But how can I? Is there any joke in it, uncle? You laugh so, I can't—"

"Joke, my darling! not a bit; only your surprise is so delicious—I wouldn't have lost that look of bewilderment for any money. No, no. The joke is, my love, that you are to be my housekeeper; but the house is your own, the grounds are yours; two hundred acres of the richest land in the country, stretching away and joining Mr. Dogvane's land at Dingham, is yours too. It's all yours, every bit, except that bachelor den below, which *I* mean to be sovereign lord and emperor over; and a more tyrannical old buffer, than I mean to be in that domain, don't exist. So not a word, now.

In that desk you'll find the deed of gift and the titles, with a spare thousand or so of ready cash to buy trumpery with. Not a word, not a word ; take possession whenever you like. I've done as much for Charlotte, though she don't want a house ; and as for Ned, in five or six years he'll be a man, and will have made a fortune ; and I don't see, so that you're all roofed in comfortably, what better I can do than live here. I sha'n't be in your way, I hope, my dear, nor you in mine. Now you see, young fellow, why I told you not to settle on a residence until you heard from me. Will this suit you, eh ? or would you prefer Dealmount ? ”

“ Ah, I half suspected what you were about, sir, when I saw the initials N. D. on the soup tureen below. I fancied that didn't stand for Charles

Bowers ; and N. D., you'll allow, is suggestive."

"Oh, you did see that, did you? Of course it was suggestive, as you call it. Confound that fellow! I'll positively discharge him; he ought to have turned the letters out of sight. But there—no thanks, no thanks; I won't have 'em. I hate 'em," he continued, seeing that Newton was about, on his own and Bessie's part, to pour forth a due amount of them. "Shew me your thanks, and be a son to my old age, Newton, since I have none, and you're about to take away the only treasure I had left. Well, well; I daresay we shall all be very happy here—eh, Lilly?"

Bessie kissed him.

"Now be off with you, and run through grounds and garden, while I give a few orders to James."

* * * * *

What do the bells ring for, making the clear, summer air resound with the merry peal? Bells, bells, dear old bells—clanging and quivering, searching the nooks of the deepest wood, echoing and re-echoing from valley to hill, seeking out the inmost recesses of loving hearts, and mingling with the trembling joy that fills them. How proudly the grey old church-tower seems to rear itself above the trees at being the bearer of such melody. “Come to church, come to church—clang, clang, clang! Come to church, come to church—clang, clang, clang!” Why, everybody seems to be obeying the summons; literally everybody. There goes the smith, and there goes Bungey, and there go all their compeers, rigged out in their cleanest linen, and their carefully-darned holiday attire. There’s the parish clerk, too, solemn and important—and the Beadle (big B, please, Mr. Printer) radiant both

as to his waistcoat and his countenance, and his nose, which has been polished with yellow soap to that degree, looks like an exaggerated carbuncle. Regard him! swelling with that weight of dignity which only those who have filled his office can accomplish. And there's the doctor's sulky, too—a veritable *black-draught* to the rhubarb-coloured cob, who's out at all hours; and Sir John Vasey's carriage, and dozens of other carriages, all glittering in the coachmaker's newest and most approved fashion. Tom Sharp, even, and his sisters, have sneaked unobserved into the church to criticise. But the bells are quiet enough now; and the aforesaid carriages draw aside to make way for others, which come dashing up with prodigious impression. What!—sky-blue post-boys and favours! Ah, we thought how it was. Bang, crash, rattle—“Ah!” a long-drawn exclamation of relief from the

crowd, as a fairy form in satin, lace, and orange blossoms—as much like a Peri as a young lady of nineteen may be—steps into the church upon Sir John Vasey's arm.

“That's Miss Bessie.”

“No, it ain't, I tell yer; it's Miss Charlotte.”

“Don't she look lovely, poor dear?”

Sensation among the men folk. The carriage drives off, and another succeeds; Uncle Crabb steps forward.

“That's Miss Charlotte.”

“No; that's Miss Bessie, I tell yer.”

“Well, to be sure! Beautiful, ain't she?”

More sensation among the men folk.

More carriages yet—a bevy of sylphs in satins and laces.

“Them's the bridesmaids. Look at that 'un in pink.”

"Ah, but that 'un in blue."

"Yes, but t'other one in white."

Sensation among the lords of the creation
—tremendous.

"That's Kernel Stevins." Opposition
sensation and chorus of females:—

"Oh, aint he 'ansom?" "Looks pale,"
says a he thing, to the "Well he may"
of the ladies. "Shows he's got of his
feelins' like all on us, as who hasn't and
knows hisself?" &c. &c.

"That's Mr. Dogwun."

"Don't *he* look pale?"

"So 'ud you, Bungey. So 'ud you, if
your time was to come over agen."

"Not a bit on it," answers Bungey, stoutly.

"If you'd a knowed wot was comin',
Bungey, you would," says the wag of
the crowd.

There's a laugh at this; Bungey
had married the greatest scold in the
parish.

“What’s he a sayin’ of?” asks Mrs. Bungey, infant in arms, from another part of the crowd.

“Says he didn’t look pale when he went and done it,” says the wag.

“Bungey, my man,” says his helpmate, menacingly.

“Oh! ah! I dare say;” and Bungey edges into the crowd, out of harm’s way, muttering:—

“If I looked pale, I didn’t look yaller.”

Mrs. Bungey was more or less troubled with the bile—“boil,” as she expressed it, and was of a sallow hue.

At length Mr. Dogvane and Mr. Bowers closed the procession. They enter the church, and the crowd closes reverently in behind them.

“Clang, clang—crash, crash!” out break the bells again, tumultuous in their joy.
“Man and wife, man and wife, evermore,

evermore ! Man and wife, man and wife,
evermore, evermore ! Cl—ang, crash ! ”

The church disgorges the merry crowd,
all talking, laughing, congratulating, con-
fusing.

The clergyman comes out, the clerk
comes out, the beadle, following the
beacon-blaze on his bowsprit-end, by which
we typify his glowing nose, looms out.
The old woman, with the limp black bonnet
and the constitutional curtsy, jerks herself
out paralytically, and the church-door is
closed and locked.

But the bells don't abate a bit ; they
roar, Ha ! ha ! up aloft in their breezy
chamber, like giants rejoicing. Never were
such bells ; one would think they must
get tired. Not a bit of it ; from the
treble bob to the tenor, every man Jack of
a bell of them resolves to do or die—to
clang its loudest, or crack for ever.

What a breakfast there is at Mr. Bowers's !

what smiles, jokes, and tears ! And what a blow-out on the green, with jokes a little ruder, and laughs a good deal louder, and no tears at all ! Well, it's only once in a lifetime. The last adieus are taken, and the last embrace given. The tag of the comedy spoken, the carriages drive away, the old shoe is thrown, and the curtain falls.

“ Newton, Newton !—Bessie, Bessie !—Char-lotte !—Kernel Stevins ! ”

* * * * *

“ Eh ! ay ? What's all this uproar ? ” we ask, in our managerial capacity, of the lad who waits at our elbow. “ The play's over ; what's the row about ? ”

“ Beg pardon, sir,” says the imp. “ The audience wants the curtain raised for another look at the actors, sir.”

“ Oh, that's all, is it ? But, eh ! why, the scene's changed, and ever so many of 'em gone home.”

“Never mind, sir ; show ’em something. They’re easy satisfied when they aint baulked.”

“Very well, then. Let’s see—what is it? Oh, mountain scene in flat—rocks and crags—river in foreground. Yes ; mist on the mountain rises, and discovers Newton, Colonel Stevens, and a Scotch laddie.” So, then. It is a lovely evening in early autumn. The scene is pre-eminently beautiful. It is in one of the most delightful and picturesque spots in the Highlands. Huge mountains raise their lofty heads all around, mound above mound, crest over crest. Woods of silvery birch and frowning pine clothe the nearer points. A splendid salmon-river rushes past opposing rocks, till it precipitates itself into a magnificent foam-flecked pool. Newton is standing by a shelving strip of gravel, panting with excitement and toil ; he has just killed,

after a desperate fight, a splendid salmon. The gillie is busy knocking the fish on the head with the gaff-handle ; Colonel Stevens is sitting on a large stone, his rod resting against his shoulder, as he looks on lazily and approvingly. Half a dozen fine sea-trout, and a fair salmon or two, show that he has had his share of sport. He smokes his cigar with an air of intense quiescent enjoyment.

“Hey, Donald, but he’s a big fellow.”

“Oh, ay,” answers Donald, “he’ll just be the fush o’ the season, Kunnel—he’ll be the fush o’ the season,” continues Donald, as he deposits the fish, a five-and-twenty pounder—clean run, and as handsome as a picture, or rather, a great deal handsomer, at the Colonel’s feet.

“Wet him, Donald—wet him, man,” and the Colonel hands Donald “a yill of fushky,” which immediately disappears into “that bourne whence” ahem! the

less said of that the better, perhaps ; the quotation mayn't be always correct."

"We shan't better him to-night, at any rate, so, I think, up tackle and home's the word."

No sooner said than done ; tackle is made up ; the rods shouldered ; they don't unscrew, being troubled with none of those abominations of ferrules, &c. ; but are nineteen feet of stout greenheart, carefully spliced, light, handy, and powerful, and equal to anything under thirty yards, or any amount of pounds in good hands.

A servant heaves in sight, with the welcome news that dinner will be ready in half an hour. He divides the fish with Donald, and they all start off up the brae, over a spur of the nearest mountain—the black cock skirring off at every hundred yards or so, and the old cock grouse "conk-conk-conking" away in all directions."

“ I’m thinking, Kunnel, ye’ll hae a braw day the morrow,” says Donald. “ I canna remember joost the day when the grooses were mair plentifu’.”

“ Nor I either, Donald. We must show Mr. Dogvane some sport to-morrow, and a full bag, Donald.”

“ We’ll do that, we’ll do that, Kunnel—ou ay, if the gentleman ’ll walk, we’ll do that.”

“ I don’t think he’ll knock up easy, and it’s odds but we give them a touch of the grouse disease to-morrow. Bess and Bell, and Dash and Don, are in first-rate condition, but Shot looks a trifle poor—he wants more meat; that dog’s a bad feeder, I’m sure of it; and Lady, too, would be all the better for a dose. Still, I think we shall get on pretty well—eh, Donald?”

“ Hoot—weell—dinna doot it.”

The high ground is gained, and they look

down on a delightful valley. On the side of the hill, just below them, is a comfortable shooting-box, sheltered by belts of trees. Below it, and in front, a calm and beautiful little loch, studded with small islets, on one or two of which a grove of birch adds to the grace and harmony of the scene. Mountains, rocks, water, trees, flowery heather, and fragrant whin, all seems formed and brought together for their especial enjoyment. As they fall the crest of the hill, the roar of the river ceases, and in a few minutes more they approach as comfortable and elegant a little villa as could be found throughout the Highlands, or anywhere else. Colonel Stevens has leased it, with the shootings and fishings connected with it, for some years. But it has undergone considerable alterations of late, and has been entirely re-furnished; and now they round the house and enter the verandah, where a couple of earthly houris,

in the persons of two of the fairest brides in Christendom, smilingly await them.

Oh, dear! Well, I suppose, people do kiss a little more and a little harder for the first six months after they are married than they do after. Why shouldn't they? But never mind.

"Newton has killed a glorious fish to-day—the biggest this season."

"Oh! I'm so glad, New, dear. The salmon look so lovely when they're just caught; not like what one's been accustomed to see in London, you know. Do let's have it in, New, dear, and—and—see it," said Bessie, all in a breath. Oh, that Bessie! Of all the delightful little married parties of my acquaintance, she did make the most—

"Donald's bringing it in, dear."

Now he needn't have kissed her again, you know, when he said that; but as Stevens and Charlotte were whispering,

et cetera, at the further end of the verandah, why, it didn't matter much; only it makes one wish one's self just fresh married, and on a visit to the most agreeable brother and sister-in-law in the world, in one of the most convenient boxes, situated in about as enjoyable a spot as any in the Highlands, with as good fishing and shooting attached as anyone could desire. The thought of this sort of thing does set one longing, you know—now, doesn't it?—particularly on the 11th of August, with everything prepared for slaughter on the morrow:—Oh dear!—and to think that one's condemned to lugging hideous jack out of ponds, and shooting sparrows—or, if one's very lucky, tame pheasants!—Yah!

But dinner is ready. Oh, what a dinner it was! The cool wines!—the comfortable chat!—the easy-chair after dinner, out in the verandah, with one of Hudson's

or Carlin's regalias at Heaven knows how much a pound, as dry as touchwood, and as fragrant as Araby! Ye gods and little fishes! Then the song from Charlotte—none of your "*Una voce poco fa's*"—not but what she could do it as well as here and there one in that line—but the delicious old simple Scotch ballad, given with such ineffable taste, with such a sweetness, and yet power, of voice, that, as it rung out and hung over the valley, the distant shepherd listened with rapt wonder and delight.

Newton sat smoking dreamily; Bessie's arm was round his neck. The song trembled lowly to a close, as if compelled by the pathos of its own words. The gloaming descends—a star or two twinkles out—and all is still.

THE END.

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